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THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

ELECTRONIC g a m e s

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 11

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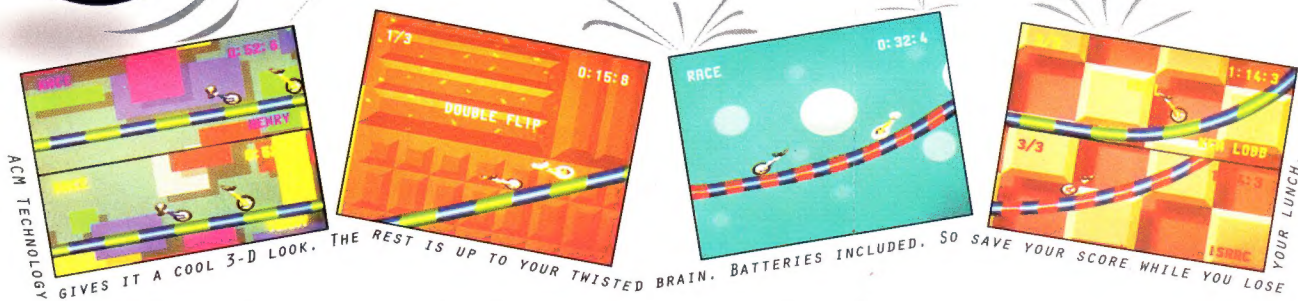
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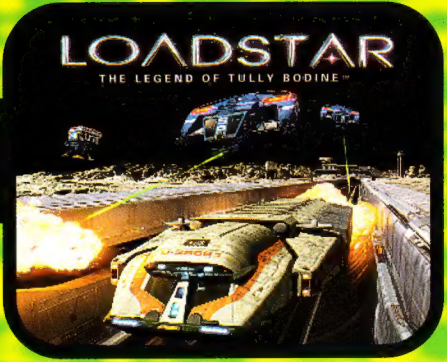


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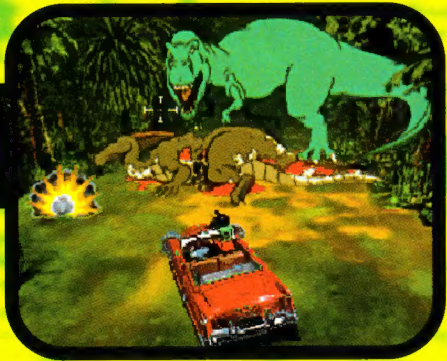
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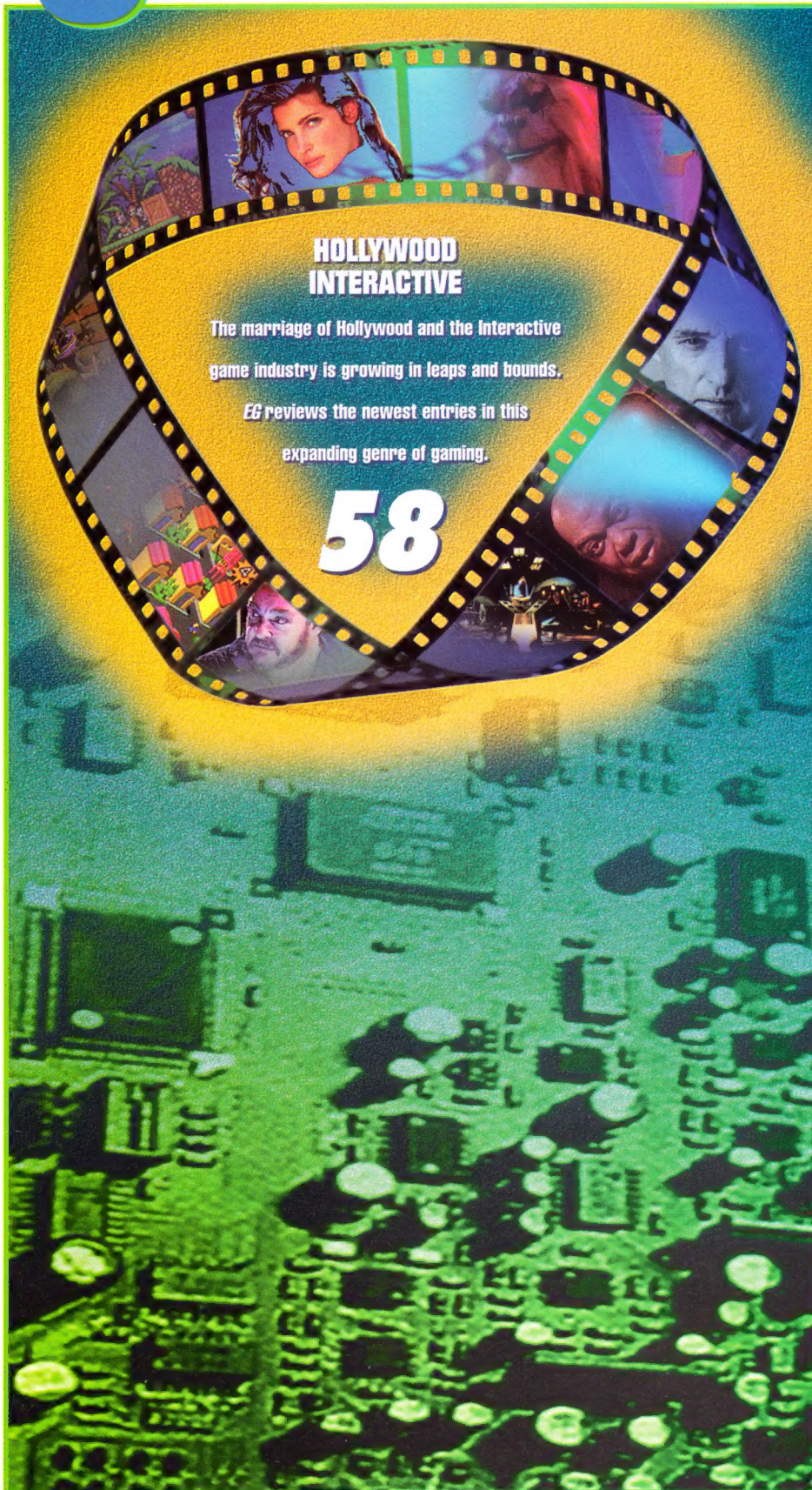
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POWER ON

Time to Redeem the Pledge?

I have written about the closely allied issues of piracy and pricing many times. My hair was long on the sides and short in the back when I started, if that gives you an idea.

My stand on piracy is simple: it's stealing. Software pirates have sent poison pen letters, punched my phone number at crazy hours and made their dislike known in a variety of unpleasant ways. I ignore these crude attempts at harassment and intimidation, and I always will. There'll be no surrender to software thievery as long as illegal copying robs even one electronic game designer of his or her fair share of the royalties. This campaign ends only when the works of game authors and implementers are fully protected.

I'm not the only one who has gone on record on the subject. With minor adjustments to cover the passage of time, the industry's anti-piracy story has remained basically the same for 15 years or more. The points are:

1. **Piracy is stealing.** Theft of service is no less larcenous than stealing merchandise.

2. **Piracy hurts consumers.** It forces publishers to keep prices high in order to make development, production and marketing costs.

3. **Piracy hurts the people who design and program electronic games.** Interactive entertainment is our hobby, but it is a full-time occupation for those who design and implement the games we love. If they can't make a decent living, they'll end up working on spreadsheets or insurance actuarial tables. A decent royalty check is the difference between not making ends meet and living reasonably comfortably.

4. **Piracy limits game quality and quantity.** The more software theft, the harder it is for publishers to recoup their investment. If the company can't make money, it starts fewer projects and spends less on each.

Those four points make an effective and convincing presentation that has served electronic gaming well. Piracy is still a problem, but it no longer chokes the life out of the field as it did in the early 1980s.



Not that the fight is over. There is still more to do, especially relative to large-scale commercial piracy. Big, illegal cartridge copiers, mostly based in the Orient, are probably the single biggest bunch of buccaneers on the information highway.

Also illegal are BBS operators who spice up their on-line offerings with downloadable files of stolen commercial programs.

Yet, the overall piracy situation is much better in 1995. Cartridges and CD-ROMs are difficult for the average person to copy, and off-disk protection schemes have drastically cut unauthorized duplication of floppy disks.

When the industry was trying to enlist the aid of concerned, ethical electronic gamers in the fight to halt piracy, they held out lower prices as the consumer's reward for limiting software theft. Since publishers invariably cited piracy as a prime reason for high retail software prices, it seemed a natural corollary that prices would fall as larceny diminished.

The other two reasons publishers usually give for high prices are the the cost of ROMs for cartridges and the small unit sales of floppy disk and multimedia titles.

The indications that electronic gaming is turning the corner to become a mass-market

hobby are everywhere. **Doom II** has sold 800,000 copies for the PC in less than six weeks, and several CD-ROM entries are certain to sell at least one million copies each this holiday season.

The time has come for the industry to take a step toward redeeming the thrice-given pricing pledge. Consumers are too sensible, by and large, to expect immediate, mammoth, across-the-board reductions, but they want a sign.

Expensive chips make it hard to drop cartridge prices, but what about other media? Pricing games like **Mortal Kombat** and **Mickey Mania** the same on a \$20 cart or a 50¢ disk won't put consumers in a mood to battle piracy. The largely erroneous image of software companies as profiteers is every thief's justification. Only lower prices can cut the ground from under them.

Some price movement at this crucial juncture in the history of interactive entertainment could actually increase sales. Consumers are likely to buy more titles if each one isn't a \$50-70 risk. Electronic gaming made a bargain with consumers. This is the year it deserves to be honored.

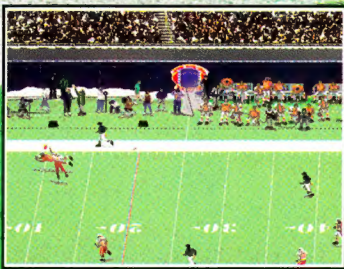
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by Arnie Katz

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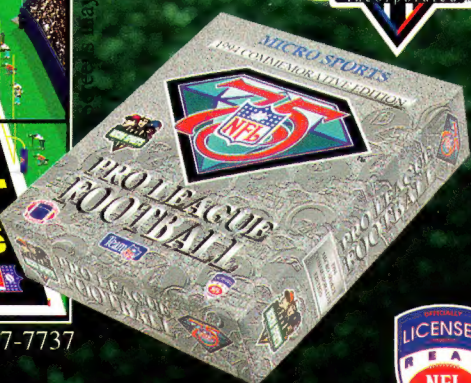
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FEEDBACK

Is Our ROM in the Cards?

In response to James Catalano's letter to the Game Doctor, the **Pong** consoles were numbered C-100, C-140, C-180, C-380 and the like. I'm not aware of any Atari system numbered 1300 (130XE though—hmm). The 2600 was probably a "part" number for internal cataloging. As to where it came from, beats me. Perhaps it was the profits, in pennies, of **Pong**'s first day at Andy Capps, up until the coin slot jammed?

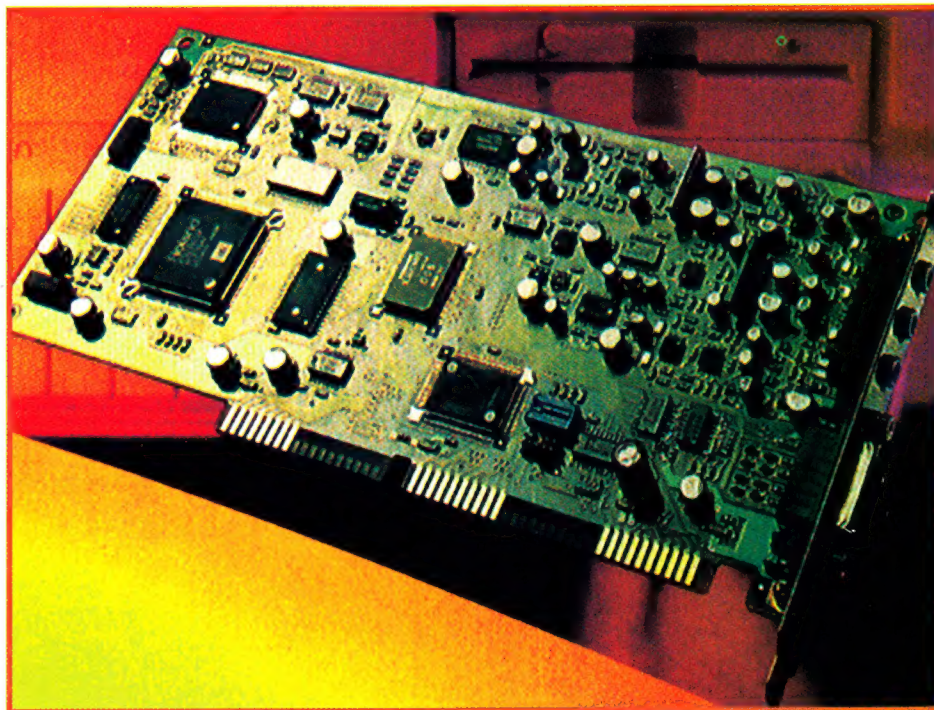
I thought I'd respond to something that the Game Doctor said: "Either a CD-based drive, or at least some form of alternate mass-media storage device should turn up (on the heels of the Ultra 64, however) since the ROM format can't remain practical for very long on such a high-powered system.

Knee jerk reactions? 1) CDs are ROM! Perhaps you meant cart? and 2) Is the Ultra 64 so high-powered? It was damn nice of them to show it to everyone at CES (sarcasm in spades)...

But in a more serious mode, I should reply as such: you were so close! Why suggest CDs as a natural successor to the cartridge? Did you ever think of Laser Cards? These are cousins to the CD, and hold enough info to do most of today's games, and only cost about \$2-3 apiece to make. Now, reference the article "Holographs store information in 3-D" on page 22 of the same issue... Imagine holographic storage on cards which don't require all the moving parts of a CD player—Hallelujah! Revolution!

Actually, holographic storage isn't news to me. I've already learned of the next step: Holographic Neural Nets, or HNets. Not only do they offer theoretically unlimited compression, they can learn behaviors. A system that can pick a face out of a crowd (they can) would certainly make a good opponent, or a good agent to weed out info on the Infobahn, or pick out bad parts on an assembly line ... This may well be the next paradigm. I would assume that gaming would get a slice.

Russ Perry Jr., Omro WI
SlapDash@anon.penet.fi



The Game Doctor responds: "You're right about the ROM, of course I was referring to ROM carts, Russ. As to the holographic cards, neat idea!" [In fact it wins you the STD controller this month!] "Now—you go out there and sell everyone the drives..."

Streetwise, but one word short

Rich Heimlich's article regarding GM (General MIDI) in the Nov. '94 issue of **EG** was in the right spirit but crippled by the misuse of a single term—"General MIDI." Gravis, Creative and other companies are probably seething. Rich was referring to MPU-401, not GM. The MPU-401 device implements the MIDI communications spec and was originally used to communicate with MIDI keyboards. You will find no mention of General MIDI in the MIDI spec, and the MPU-401 device is just as happy asking for custom Roland Sound Canvas instruments and controllers as those restricted to GM.

GM is basically a set of instrument and percussion assignments and works within the restrictions of the MIDI communications spec but is not directly related to the MPU-401.

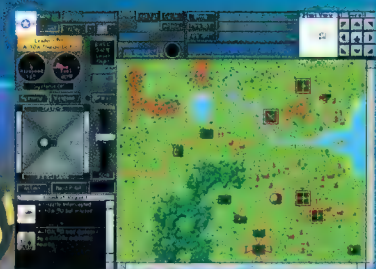
Both the Gravis and AWE-32 support GM. The Ultrasound can emulate the MPU-401 as can the AWE-32, but software emulation is rarely as good as the real thing. Interestingly, both also sport the ability to replace instruments with custom patches, which most musicians will agree is a very cool feature. Unfortunately for them, businessmen and coders run the show, and there is understandably little interest in supporting fringe hardware.

"Are sound problems the number one tech support call at your company?" was a telling question, but it had little to do with MPU-401s. The majority of the callers' problems reduce to IRQ or DMA conflicts with another card (a failing of the ISA bus architecture), incorrect BLASTER variables, driver versions or driver parameters. These can all be fixed. The real point is that the issues stemming from that question have just about nothing to do with music.

In contrast, music is much better behaved. Though pathetic at rendering percussions and non-techno music, Adlib and SB (the OPL2 and OPL3 FM chips) sound is stable and everywhere. MPU-401 cards are the high-end de-facto standard. Not perfect, but not bad at

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TOP VIDEO GAMES October 1994

This list, prepared by Babbages, is based on units sold in the Babbages chain.

Top SNES Carts

1. *Final Fantasy III*, Square Soft
2. *Mortal Kombat II*, Acclaim
3. *Illusion of Gaia*, Nintendo

Square Soft's sequel managed to punch out MKII.

Top Genesis Carts

1. *NHL '95*, EA Sports
 2. *Sonic & Knuckles*, Sega
 3. *Bill Walsh College Football '95*, EA Sports
- NHL '95 scored big!

Top Game Gear Carts

1. *Mortal Kombat II*, Acclaim
 2. *Star Trek: Advanced Tutorial*, Absolute
 3. *5 Ft 10 Pack*, Sirius
- MK II is a tough fighter even in small format.

Top Sega CD Disks

1. *Heart of the Alien*, Virgin
2. *AD&D Eye of the Beholder*, Sega
3. *Vay*, Working Designs

Sci-fi and fantasy lead the pack.

Top 3DO Disks

1. *Wailalae Country Club*, Panasonic
2. *VR Stalker*, American Laser Games
3. *Way of the Warrior*, Universal Interactive

all. The problem with GM is that the instruments don't always sound like what you wanted. This is what "The Fat Man" brought up at the CGDC regarding GM, and it is motivated by the fact that the same score can sound like a gift from God on an SCC-1 yet sound like it came from the behind of an organ grinder's monkey on the Ultrasound. GM instrument consistency aside, the MPU-401 device behaves as advertised. Through the MPU-401, you can instruct the card to play truly incredible music. It's safe to say that the MPU-401 standard gives us the potential for music much more powerful and exciting than what the SB standard is getting us in digitized sound.

Rich's comment that "Recently, Creative Labs joined this no-frills club with their Sound Blaster AWE-32" is a poor exaggeration. The AWE-32 has plenty of frills, including 512k of RAM with which one can upload extra instruments or sound effects. They're

basing their Sound Font technology off of this feature, and it also offers a way to off-load sound-effect mixing overhead for developers desperate for lots of channels and low overhead with which to showcase their game. It may have been a valid and classic design trade off for real-estate or cost. Perhaps they thought some other feature was more important. No developer or engineer is immune to these issues. Still, bad move, Creative. The MPU-401 is just a communication device, and manufacturers could build around it at least until the turn of the century without fully exploiting what the PC can communicate through it. Anything over \$200 street price should not be compromised by a feature that important if it indeed only costs the manufacturer \$5.

I agree from a biased point of view that the game developer is often unfairly blamed by the manufacturer. Non-standard anything is a nightmarish maintenance problem for us which takes months off the development of our next game. It would be much appreciated if the hardware manufacturers would splurge on the few extra bucks to make millions of users and hundreds of developers happier.

**Dave Taylor, id Software
Mesquite, TX**

Thanks, Dave, for your insight from the developers' point of view. Rich replies, Dave, you and I are both on the same boat when it comes to MPU-401 and GM. We both know what we're talking about. The fact is however, that the average consumer doesn't have a clue as to what an MPU-401 is anymore than they know what a YMF262 is (OPL3 FM). The term GM has, whether professionals care to accept it or not, taken on a generic meaning to the consumer.

To them if their game says it has GM music and their card claims support for GM then it should play that music. It's not the consumer's fault that Advanced Gravis chose to take liberties with this assumption. I'm all for correcting the consumer on MPU-401 but it's not that easy. Perhaps developers can help this along by referring to that type of support as GM/MPU-401 and then later drop the GM portion.

TOP COMPUTER GAMES October 1994

This list, prepared by PC Data, is based on units sold by 16 retail chains, representing over 4,000 stores.

Top PC Disks

1. *TIE Fighter*, LucasArts
2. *Sim City 2000*, Maxis
3. *Flight Simulator*, Microsoft

TIE Fighter is commanding its second month at the top.

Top Macintosh Disks

1. *SimCity 2000*, Maxis
 2. *Links Pro*, Access
 3. *Castles: Siege & Conquest*, Interplay
- City-building remains the fun favorite for Mac players.

Top CD-ROMs

1. *Myst*, Broderbund
 2. *Outpost*, Sierra
 3. *5 Ft 10 Pack*, Sirius
- Broderbund's fantasy adventure is still in the top spot.



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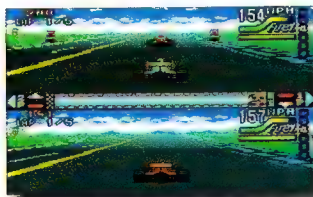
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TOP COIN-OPS October 1994

Figures courtesy of *Replay Magazine*, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Revolution X*, Midway
2. *Virtua Fighter*, Sega
3. *Mortal Kombat II*, Midway

The positions have changed, but the top three stayed the same.

Best Deluxe Videos

1. *Daytona USA*, Sega
2. *Cruis'n USA*, Midway
3. *Ridge Racers*, Namco

Sega's is still out in front in this three-way race.

Best Coin-Op Video Software

1. *Darkstalkers*, Capcom
2. *King of the Fighters '94*, SNK
3. *Super Sidekicks 2*, SNK

Darkstalkers maintains control again this month.

Best Pinball Machines

1. *Freddy/Nightmare*, Premier
2. *Star Trek*, Williams
3. *Addams Family*, Midway

As for your comment concerning the AWE-32 "Perhaps they thought some other feature was more important," my response is simple. I'm sure they thought that, but it's also my opinion that they were dead-wrong in their thinking. GM/MPU-401 is a standard worth protecting. You accurately stated that music is in better shape today than the digital part of the equation. If we accept products that skimp on crucial hardware then the music side of the equation will soon be no better off than the digital side. Yes, the AWE-32 has some nice features but the "cost" is too much to bear.

Surfeit of Sex and Violence

I didn't read the Virtual Sex article because, frankly, I'm sick of them. Everywhere you look, there's an article or a snippet on the tabloid news shows about the latest FMV-Feel The Girl's Breasts Game. But, I'll probably read it later on.

I think the *Relics* article was pretty broad. How about some good stories about the happenings in the good old days? Sure, it might be nice to introduce such classics as *Berzerk* and *Adventure* to 'Generation Y', but I'm



sure a lot of the collectors and video game nostalgics out there would like to see something a bit different. Perhaps focusing on some of the wacky flash-in-the-pan hardware etc. (Remember Atari's *Mindlink*?) or some of those rare gem classics that not too many people have heard of, etc. etc.

Also, Bill Kunkel was on the money about today's arcades. The games are so bland ... there's no variety. It's not just the arcade operator's fault, which is what I think Bill was sort of hinting at. I'd say most of the blame rests on the shoulders of the game producers.

Capcom hasn't released a game that wasn't a *Final Fight* or *Street Fighter* derivative into the arcades in five years (With the exception of *Quiz* and *Dragons*). You can't tell me that a company as large as Capcom can't spend a few bucks developing some new concepts.

TWI/Atari Games seems to be one of the few companies out there taking chances. *Space Lords* was a bold, if fatally flawed, attempt to inject some diversity into the industry. And while *T-MEK* may be similar to *CyberSled*, at least it's a change. (Plus, they started development on *T-MEK* before they saw *CyberSled* anyway)

I like a good fighting game every once in a while, but this is getting ridiculous. Even when *Pac-Man* was at its peak popularity, I don't think we saw as many maze-chase variants as we see fighting game variants today. But then again, there weren't as many

companies producing coin-ops back then. Well, I've said it before—I'd rather play **Discs of TRON**.

Ralph Barbagallo
rbarbaga@cs.uml.edu

Some good points, Ralph. It would be good to see more variety in the arcades again. The entire industry is under constant change and there'll be something else filling the coin-ops in five years—though if we knew what, we'd be investing in it right now. As to Relics, thanks for some good thoughts, but regrettable circumstances have retired the column from EG's pages indefinitely.

EG On-line?

Are your articles and pictures available on-line here at AOL? I looked in the magazines section and could not find you.

Glad that you are showing more attention to the classic games areas. Please keep the spotlight on the roots of gaming as well as the horizons. Thanks.

Belldude
(No Address Given)

No, Belldude, the nearest we are to being online (so far) is that we can be reached at the e-mail address below. Thank you for the kudos, but see our response to the previous writer.

Thanks all. We're here and will be around awhile, so let us hear from you. Write to us at:

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Mindscape Acquires SSI

Strategic Simulations, Inc. Extensive Game Line To Go Multiplatform Due To A Recent Merger With The Mindscape Company

Mindscape announced that it acquired Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI) for an undisclosed amount. SSI will become a subsidiary of Mindscape, but will operate independently, with no changes in management personnel. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," said Mindscape President Bob Lloyd. "SSI is a cornerstone in our efforts to establish Mindscape as a major player in the field of entertainment software. This acquisition augments our already strong educational and informational development efforts with outstanding entertainment development expertise."

He explained some of the reasons for the acquisition: "We took inventory of ourselves in terms of our development efforts. We have consistently brought out very strong information and education products that were

developed internally. But in the entertainment area, we tended to use all outside resources. It was our goal to strengthen our internal development resources in terms of entertainment products.

"We liked SSI; they are very well known within their product line of fantasy role-playing and strategy games. We felt that by bringing them in, making them an internal part of Mindscape, that it helped us build an internal strength in entertainment."

From now on, Mindscape will handle the sales and distribution for the SSI lines of games, but SSI will continue to develop products in Mountain View.

Although the two branches of the company will operate separately, there will be crossovers. Mindscape recently took a license from WarHammer. SSI will have a great deal of input and a guiding role in that devel-

opment. "But we don't want to limit them, or to limit our people. It really is a matter that we don't want to bottle up creativity."

Looking toward the future, Lloyd said, "One of the things that interested us in the acquisition of SSI is that they were held back by the limitations of cartridge machines. Because their products require so much memory, they were limited to the personal computer market. Now with the dedicated CD machines from Sega and soon from Sony, and the much more powerful cartridge machine, the Ultra 64, coming from Nintendo, SSI can play in the larger arena of a broader platform base."

There's another reason that the merger was attractive to Mindscape. "Now with the SSI product line added to our existing line, it just makes sense for us to have more of a presence in the

Japanese market ourselves, so one of our goals going forward is looking for stronger distribution in that area."

We asked what products they would first take to Japan. Lloyd said, "Probably some of the SSI products that are FRPs but with a little more action adventure base to them. That is not to replace the traditional FRP products, but to augment them."

Lloyd discussed the reasons Software Toolworks recently changed its name to Mindscape. He said: "Previously software was bought by people who knew how to operate a computer. Now our software is being bought by people whose VCRs are flashing midnight. It's a completely different consumer. We felt that the name Mindscape was a broader umbrella under which to fit information, edutainment and entertainment products."



"The name change really has nothing to do with the direction of the company. Our charter, we believe, has always been to provide compelling software to the consumer in those three areas."

Joel Billings, head honcho of SSI, explained how the deal came about. "We were out there for about a year to find somebody to partner up with. They heard about it from one of the investment banking firms—that's how we actually got matched together. Then we talked for about five months. I first met with them at the January CES, then we actually got serious in June. It took from June until October to finish the deal."

As to how it will affect SSI's game development in the future, Billings spoke optimistically: "I think it will help us tremendously because they can give us the resources to allow us to get our product on more platforms than we could otherwise. We're working on the Sony PSX, the 3DO and obviously PC-CD. Those are the three now. The future will probably involve the Sega Saturn and possibly the Ultra 64."

"The Ultra 64 is something that we would not have considered at all by ourselves (because it's a cartridge platform and we

had to stay out of cartridge because of the money involved). But with Mindscape's help we will be able to go that direction."

Will SSI expand the type of products they do? Lloyd said, "We will certainly continue to do wargames and fantasy role-players; we hope to be just as strong in those areas. But if you look at our current releases, you see that we have moved more and more to action blends of those strategy and role-playing elements, in products like **Renegade** and **Cyclone** that are a blend of action strategy and role-playing. **Slayer** for 3DO is a good example of what we're doing."

"Role-playing, war games and strategy will still be important to us but the kinds of games will change a little. We'll end up being in all these categories, the simulators, (we're working on a sub simulator now), the action games and sports. The only category of game we know about we haven't participated in is graphic adventures."

He summed it all up with this: "The guts of what makes us SSI to the end user, which is the R&D and marketing and sales efforts, and the tech and customer support are all going to stay the same."

BOSS OPENS GAME STUDIO

The award-winning Boss Film Studios opened a video game division called Boss Games Studios, with plans to develop games tied to feature films, as well as original titles.

Jim Bosler, president and CEO of the new game studio, said, "A primary goal for Boss Games will be to take advantage of the exceptional creative and technical capabilities developed at Boss Film."

Bosler explained: "The experience of Boss Film with 3-D computer animation, proprietary motion-capture technology, and in the creation of unusual characters will be directly applicable to our games."

According to Bosler, the company plans to start with one game based on a licensed property, plus one original title, for Nintendo's Ultra 64, and probably also for the Sony PlayStation, Sega's Saturn and PC CD-ROM. Though they haven't released any details, the games will probably be in the action category.

Bosler already has some heavy-hitter game talent on-board, including Seth Mendelsohn who'll fill the role of creative director.

The game studio will have access to the Boss computer-generated imagery department with 50 Silicon Graphics workstations, model shop, sound stages, robotic cameras, motion-capture software and hardware, art departments, recording and scanning capabilities and complete technical support staff.

Boss Studios produced the visual effects for *Cliffhanger*, *Batman Returns*, *Alien*, *Die Hard*, *Pokeyes II* and *Ghostbusters*. The studio also produced *Scuba Dog*, an underwater adventure film.

GREYSTONE GOES SKIING

GreyStone Technologies is upping its amusement efforts with the Mercury VR platform, a motion-based system that resembles a high-tech jet ski, on which the player rides prone or semi-prone.

Mercury features a stereoscopic display system, 3-D surround sound and real-time response to user input. The platform can be used with several virtual experiences developed by GreyStone, including Canyon Runner, a five-minute, harrowing, multiplayer canyon race in futuristic armed aircraft. Other programs are Reef Explorer, an underwater excursion in a minisub and The Pteranodon, a fantasy flight sim on the back of a giant dinosaur.

With these products as a jumping-off point, GreyStone plans to build the next generation of virtual reality entertainment centers where gamers can play a number of VR experiences, alone or in teams. Images and sensations will react to individual input, courtesy of GreyStone software and graphics-generating computers.

Their prototype VR amusement center is slated to open by the end of the year in San Diego, where they are currently negotiating for retail space. "We're going for the high end," says GreyStone spokesman David Klugh. "True virtual reality requires certain attributes, such as immersion, detailed



BUILT FOR CYBERSPEED

The slick new Mercury VR Platform will utilize several motion-based action games developed by GreyStone Technologies.

graphics, surround sound and some form of feedback. We have incorporated all these things in one package."

San Diego-based GreyStone Technologies develops specialized software for military aircraft, air combat simulators and artificial intelligence software for commercial and defense applications.

NEWS WIRE ... STAR TEAM FORMS TERRAGLYPH

A

group of star-quality industry veterans are cooperating to form TerraGlyph Interactive Studios. The new company plans to develop PC-CD games for kids three to 12 years old.

TerraGlyph is long on talent. The president and CEO is Dennis Defensor, former CEO of ICOM Simulations, and senior VP of Viacom; Rita Zimmerer, former executive at Sunsoft; Luana Chambers, former director of Warner Bros. Interactive; plus Joseph Gaucher and David Hoy, both former ICOM and Viacom veterans.

Dennis Defensor is understandably proud of his team. "Most of our careers have spanned the history of the industry. We have proven track records in technology, product development, worldwide marketing and sales and financial management."

Rita Zimmerer talked to EG. "We're going with PC Windows CD-ROM, and we'll watch future platforms. But we believe CD-ROM will be the norm for future products."

She talked about the future of computer gaming: "Down the road I think we'll see a lot of channeling technology; a lot of computer creations rather than live actors... We want to be the Studio of the 21st century, and we're making strides every day to create that studio."

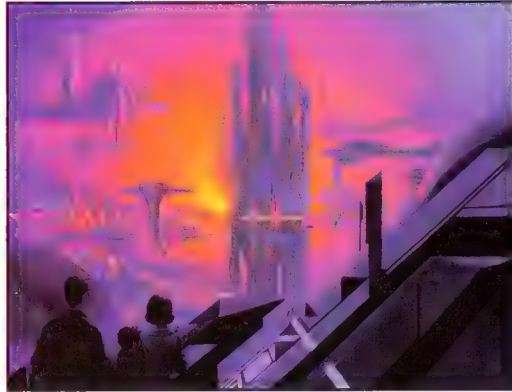
The first licenses purchased are *Tiny Toons Adventure* and *Kid's Songs*, and they plan edutainment-oriented products that "the whole family can play and find value in what they are playing and listening to."

She elaborated saying: "These are cornerstones, and we'll establish libraries, for teaching kids. We are working with educators and people in the industry. We consider ourselves to be family oriented; that's the true target."

KA WORLDS' ON-LINE SERVICE WILL FEATURE INTERACTIVE WORLD'S FAIR

Knowledge Adventure, a company best known for top-drawer educational products, is looking smart with a new subsidiary corporation, KA Worlds.

onscreen image, seen by other users when they chat. These Digital Actors are created by **Lifeforms**, a system that produces realistic movement.



Characters can be realistic or fantasy-based. The technology lets them walk, swim, fly, bowl, play pinball or ice skate.

World's Fair is divided into 14 Zones, and each Zone has various pavilions that contain games, exhibits and services

(news or shopping).

Worlds will launch a new on-line service in 1995 that features a three-dimensional landscape created by designers like futurist artist Sid Mead, Animated Digital actors and what the company is dubbing "point and stroll" movement.

Greg Beasley explained how the technical partnership works: "Landmark Entertainment Group knows how theme parks work in real space; we know how they work in Cyberspace."

Interactive World's Fair is now being created by KA Worlds, pioneers in 3-D navigation software for Internet, working with Landmark Entertainment, the

He also discussed the look for the place: "We have about 100 conceptual drawings, by Sid Mead and other designers, that we're pulling together. We paste them up on virtual walls, to make

SEGA CHANNEL GETS VIRTUAL i-GLASSES

Sega Channel subscribers will get the first look at i-glasses! and Gamer! accessories. According to Virtual I/O President Greg Amadon, the Personal Display Systems are for people "who can use them for having more fun, doing better work and creating new ways to do things."

He explained his vision of the future of the product: "I believe

that in the next five years, Personal Display Systems will become standard operating equipment for everyone from computer users who want a private, big screen; video and computer gamers who want a more realistic environment for playing games and airline passengers who want a comfortable and visually exciting way to watch movies on a flight."

The company will introduce a line of products in 1995, including *The Gamer!*, scheduled to be priced at \$399, which uses real-time head tracking to create a 360 degree environment. The 11 oz. device works with all video game systems.



PD i-glasses! weigh 7 oz., and will list for \$599.



world's largest designer of theme parks, casinos and resorts. Other partners and investors on the ground floor of this new network include Steven Spielberg, Random House, Paramount and AT&T.

All users will design their own

the environments. The pavilions are set up around three basic lines: one is to hang out, gawk and look, because it's so beautiful."

The service will be available for PC users with CD ability, and is set to launch late in 1995.

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ACCLAIM, TCI TEAM UP FOR CABLE GAMING

Tele-Communications, Inc. (TCI) agreed to purchase about 10 percent of Acclaim Entertainment, for about \$76 million. The two companies plan to form a new company for the development of software for broadband interactive networks, and to promote a new, broadband network game platform for set-top boxes.

John Malone, CEO of TCI, explained: "We think that competitive games of skill over broadband networks will represent a major new segment of our business. By working with Acclaim we expect to lead the industry in the development of new platforms for network games. Acclaim's proven marketing strength will help our joint venture to serve the mass market

for this form of entertainment."

Greg Fischback, CEO of Acclaim, said: "Entertainment is the most widespread application for interactive technology in the home today, and we plan to add a new dimension to how consumers experience and perceive home entertainment. By uniting TCI's broadband cable networks with Acclaim's licensing, marketing and product development strength, we will bring video gaming into a new era."

The new company will be owned 65 percent by Acclaim and 35 percent by TCI, and will focus on acquisition and licensing properties for distribution through interactive electronic media, the creation of games for broadband networks and development of interactive game network programming.

TCI was involved in the launch of the Sega Channel, available for a dozen markets.

The new company will be managed by a combination of Acclaim and TCI personnel.

MICROSOFT ON TRICK OR TREAT TRAIL IN SALEM

Microsoft joined the Arthritis Foundation and local sponsors for The Trick or Treat Walk in Salem, MA. The annual Halloween celebration is a 1.5-mile trek for costumers, who end the march with refreshments, a live band and costume contest. There were about 800 participants, and the walk raised \$26,000 for the Arthritis Foundation.



ware piracy. What we've done with Temporus is give software developers an opportunity to turn a problem into a strong sales advantage."

3DO SETS FEE FOR GAME DEVELOPERS

Trip Hawkins, CEO of 3DO, notified game developers that they must pay a \$3 fee on every copy of all 3DO games. This is in addition to the \$3 royalty the companies already pay. The new fee will be used for a Market Development Fund, to help the hardware manufacturers, and to fund an expanded ad campaign.

Hawkins said that the hardware manufacturers, Matsushita, Sony, Goldstar, Creative Technology and Sanyo, face a combined loss of about \$200 million.

The fund is a way for them to recoup some of those losses.

Some developers protested that the preexisting royalty fee was already a burden, and that this new financial burden would greatly hinder the profitability of developing software for 3DO players.

ATARI VOWS YEAR-END VR GAMES

Atari Corporation has made a deal with Virtuality Group to create virtual reality games for home play. Virtuality, a leader in virtual reality technology, will develop a Jaguar-compatible, head-mounted virtuality reality display, which should reach the market before Christmas, at a price of less than \$200.

Atari's President Sam Tramiel said, "Combining Virtuality's ability to deliver low-cost solutions for virtual reality technology applications with the processing power capabilities of the 64-Bit Atari Jaguar will result in a very high-quality, virtual reality experience at a very affordable price."

THE SINISTAR STORY

Before the wonders of multimedia, before Super Blaster, in the days when only families and wealthy people could afford CD-players for their stereos, very few companies tried to incorporate digitized speech into their video games. Some of the first games to include speech were Berserk, in which a voice said, "Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!" Nintendo's Punch Out had comic boxing lines like, "C'mon, C'mon," "Body blow" (which sounded more like "Mighty blow") and "Knock Him Out!"

Of the first games to incorporate speech, the most interesting was a game called Sinistar. In Sinistar, one of the most imaginative and challenging space shoot 'em-ups of the early '80s, players matched wits with a demonic asteroid. In this game, players aimed for crystals by flying into space debris and shooting it until it released crystals. Those crystals were the only weapons that could hurt the sinister Sinistar, a fast-moving star that looked like a cross between an ice cube and a foot with a bad haircut. Players collected crystals as quickly as possible because once the demon star appeared, digging for crystals was out of the question. Eventually it loud voice proclaimed "I hunger!" and the Sinistar flew into the screen and tried to destroy the player's ship. The only way to destroy the Sinistar was to avoid it and hit it with crystals when it came too close.

R.J. Michael, who co-created Sinistar, originally called the game Opic Star. "When we first made the game, the Sinistar didn't say 'I hunger,' it said, 'Run coward! Run.' We had a really cheesy sound system. It sounded more like 'How Howard! Run,' so we nicknamed the game after the character on the Andy Griffith show." (Steve Kent)

TWO COMPANIES ANNOUNCE TRY- BEFORE-YOU-BUY

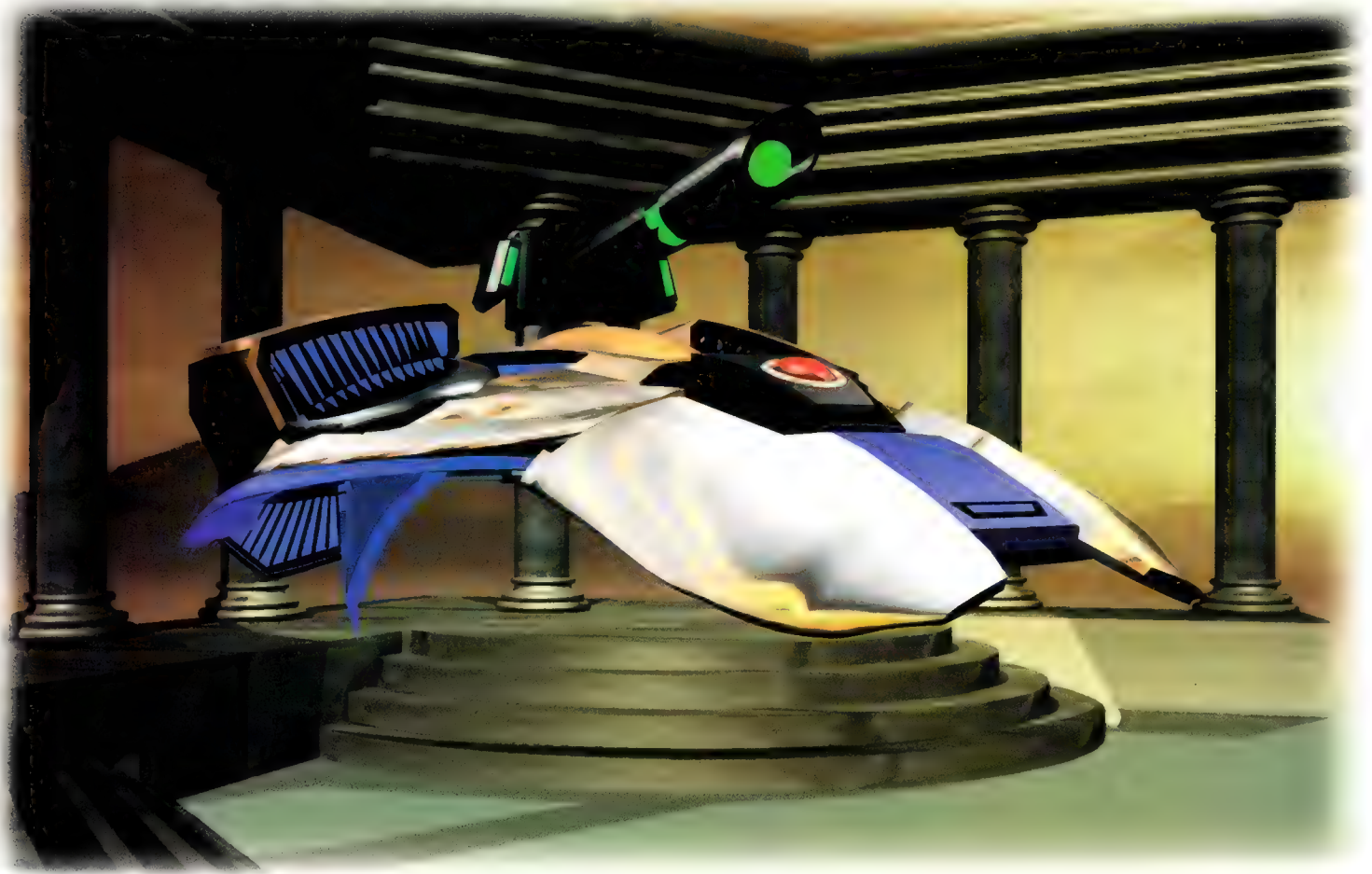
Test Drive Corp. just patented a try-before-you-buy data protection scheme. The new technology lets publishers and hardware manufacturers produce versions of their software that work for a trial period. It also instructs the user on how to order the product. The Test Drive encryption method can be used on all digital material, including CD-ROMs, on-line shopping, digital TV, videos, photo CDs, music recordings and electronic media.

KSC released its software security program, Temporus, which lets developers of magnetic disks, CD-ROMs, BBSes and Shareware code their software for a trial period. Again, when the software stops working, an onscreen message tells the player how to upgrade. Copies made of the software also will eventually lock up.

KSC's Ed Hanley explained why this is important: "It's estimated that over \$13 billion are lost annually as a result of soft-

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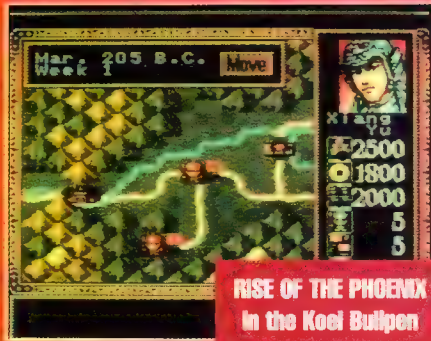
K

oei, a company best known for detailed war simulations, will release *Brandish* during the first quarter of this year. The company obtained the rights for the game

Falcon, done in Japan on the PC, and Koei will also release it for the PC later this year. The game takes place underground, as the player moves through five levels, each with a series of mazes. Action is seen from



BRANDISH
Featured Female



RISE OF THE PHOENIX
In the Koei Bulpen

an over-head perspective, with a pull-up map available. *Brandish* has a female antagonist, Alexis, who flogs the gamer's steps. Features include a magic shop, arms store and local friendlies who sell information. Obstacles often require strategic thinking more than swordplay, such as crossing rivers by redirecting their flow. But, there's lots of room for action, with over 50 monsters, such as killer bees, a monstrous half-woman/half-spider and four-handed swordsmen to keep the challenge lively. Koei is also readying *Rise of the Phoenix*, an intermediate level strategy contest set at the end of the Chen Dynasty. It has field and city battles, and lets the player take unusual actions, like damming a river to flood the castle, or charging the opponent on horseback. It's set for a March release on the SNES.

an over-head perspective, with a pull-up map available.

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DID YOU KNOW...

Nintendo expects to make more than \$100 million from the much-anticipated game **Donkey Kong Country**. The company shipped over 2 million units before the end of 1994 ... PF Magic says it had the first ever simultaneous release of a game, soundtrack CD and music video, with **PaTaank**, the soundtrack *Torcano* and a music video by H-Gun Labs ... No wonder manufacturers are rushing to CD: CD software sales hit \$140 million in second quarter '94; that's a 421 percent increase from the same period last year ... Olé! The latest version of Plustek's *ScanFX* desktop scanner not only translates print to word-processing documents, it also can convert English to Spanish ... America Online established an Internet World Wide Web site; no word yet when it will be launched ... Holiday Inn is currently testing a unique new service which would make on-line services available for their customers. The hotel guests will be able to sign on, get video on demand, shop, get a variety of information and even play games.

STAR POWER

The world was stunned by the death of Raul Julia late in 1994. The well-known actor had just finished his work on the **Street Fighter** movie. According to Capcom, the Universal Pictures release will not be affected by his passing.

In other *Street Fighter Movie* news, Deion Sanders ('49ers defensive back) raps with Hammer on the title track.

Other rappers on the soundtrack album include Public Enemy, Ice Cube, Paris and Nas.

Philips Media will publish a CD game based on *The Crow*. It's expected to be created for multiple CD formats.

Compton's latest music video is **Yes: Active**, with all tracks from the album *Talk*. Each song has the music, lyrics and a video commentary, alternative versions, rehearsal and concert footage, and a *Yes* discography and history.



Deion Sanders lends his talents as a rapper to the soundtrack of the upcoming *Street Fighter* movie.

KIDSOFT, RONALD MCDONALD CLICK WITH SICK KIDS

The Palo Alto Ronald McDonald House and Kidsoft are working together to test Project C.L.I.K. (Computer Learning for Ill Kids). They're pairing kids in the house with Macintosh computers equipped with CD-drives.

Kidsoft president Rick Devine explained: "When we saw how children in the C.L.I.K. program were using multimedia as a creative and oftentimes healing tool, we instantly wanted to be involved in getting more computers into Ronald McDonald Houses."

Kidsoft and participating developers will donate \$2 to the project for each specially designated Club Kidsoft product purchased until Jan. 31, 1995.

Robin Katsaros, co-founder of Project C.L.I.K., hopes to expand to include all Ronald McDonald Houses. "It's so rewarding to see these special children laughing, learning, playing games and creating fabulous stories and artwork. The smiles on their faces are all we need to see to know that the numerous hours donated by our dedicated volunteers are worth it."

MICROSOFT'S MARVEL ON WINDOWS '95

The beta version of Microsoft's **Windows '95** contains the utility for the much-discussed Marvel Network, even though Microsoft officials are still mum on the topic. Industry analysts say that the program is likely to have America Online and Prodigy support as well.

Microsoft VP Mike Maples, while speaking at the Information Industry Association conference in New York, did say that Microsoft was investigating broadband on-line network offerings and that they should appear this year.

Chairman Bill Gates also said that the company would likely offer an on-line service in 1995.

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INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

JULIE CARLSON: FROM INTERPRETER TO DESIGNER

While most holders of a B.A. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations wouldn't consider the interactive entertainment industry for a career, Julie Carlson joined Koei Corporation in 1990 and hasn't looked back. "I started out at Koei as an interpreter/translator. I worked on manuals (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms II*, *Nobunaga's Ambition* and *Uncharted Waters*), translating them from Japanese to English, and while I was working on the manuals I had to play the games extensively. [Soon] you see what you like and don't like in games."



INTERPRETIVE SKILLS
A woman of action, Julie Carlson believes in self-motivation.

A quick study, Julie is currently the supervisor of Research & Development at Koei. "I found myself moving into the game design end of the business. Koei is a great company for allowing you to move into areas that you're interested in," she attests. "So I was able to move into design pretty easily, just by zipping my skills in working with the games, and working with programmers."

Julie sees game design turning more toward multimedia and increased interac-

tivity. From Koei's perspective, "Our games are trying to reach out more toward the multimedia audience. However, our games aren't at that stage [yet], so the game designers' mentality is that we want to get more interactive, but we're not able to get [that] interactive in our strategy-based games yet."

"For *Celtic Tales*, we've had great ideas on how to work rune spells, but given time limits we can't come up with the graphics, and the program's not quick enough," Julie hopes that the move toward CD-ROM will help eliminate such frustrations. "As we head toward multimedia, I think that things [will] go much faster. Games should really speed up with the new systems."

Julie does have suggestions for game development wannabes. "If you're really interested in working on games, find any way you can to get into a game company and then work your way up. If you can't get to the level you wanted, find an in and make yourself obvious."

"I am a true believer in action, [in] seeing people make themselves [stand out. That's how it works at] Koei—people make themselves [stand out] when they're moved to a new position and I think that can happen in the game design world. It happened within our company whether it was Japan or the United States; people shift positions or—and I've seen it happen in other companies, such as Sega—game testers [get advanced, over time] to game design positions."

(Laurie Yates)

WHISPERS IN CYBERSPACE WITH JJ BARREL

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

Now, via satellite from northern Canada ... JJ Barrel!

After months of weasel-wording, Microsoft has admitted the worst-kept secret in telecommunications: **Windows '95** has support for a new MicroSoft-owned telecommunications service, Marvel Network. AOL's stock dropped \$6.74 on the day of the announcement. It'll be back up there soon enough, because it is still the fastest-growing service with 1.25 million users...

3DO's \$3-a-pop royalty surcharge is making waves. It's supposed to help hardware manufacturers wipe out their \$200-million deficit. It won't help software support much, though. Some

companies claim they can't sell enough copies of a game to make a profit with this new expense...

Several TV stations yanked **Earthworm Jim** ads within days of the campaign's launch. Something about a grandmother eating worms evidently bothered the same folks who cheerfully schedule Depends ads at dinner-time...

EIA moved the annual Software Showcase to the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, now that the summer edition is gone. Out of 150 products, the judges gave one electronic game a perfect score of 25—**Donkey Kong Country**...

Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft, is at it once again! He continues to make major strategic investments in interactive entertainment. The latest addition to his portfolio is a stake in Trilobyte, the outfit that produced **The 7th Guest**.

NO WIRES ON NAKI'S 3DO PAD

The Nakitek Wireless Controller for the 3DO system uses infra red for hands-free control up to 40 feet from the unit, and offers slow motion and turbo control features for each button.

At an SRP of \$59.99/pair, the controllers join Naki Interactive's other 3DO products like its Soundjammer Mini-Speakers, Pro Extension cables and Automatic Switchers. The unit is



the first independently made controller of any kind for 3DO systems, according to company Vice President David Naghi.

He continued: "As more manufacturers join the 3DO platform, the market need for 3DO accessories is beginning to take shape."

COMPUTER MUSEUM OPENS HIGHWAY SHOW

Boston's Computer Museum opened The Networked Planet, a special exhibit to make the information highway visible to the public. Museum visitors get a chance to learn about the highway, as they study the \$2 million exhibit. They ride along the highway, and use a key card to log in at each area, as an electronic guide explains the technology and its meaning.

Visitors see demonstrations of a 3-D animated telephone line; watch satellite, radar and sensor feeds of weather information; watch the SWIFT banking network and sample the Internet, America On-line, eWorld and CompuServe. A guide explains the technology and the impact of the network and prompts visitors to weigh its cost and benefits.

Boston University's Professor of Management Lee Sproull explained. "This exhibit is significant because networks affect every man, woman, child and community."

DREAM IT

LIVE IT

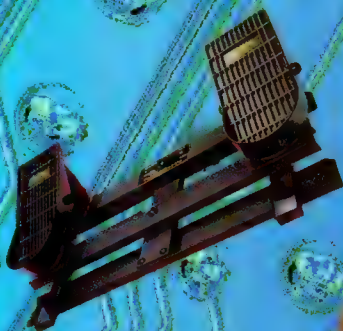
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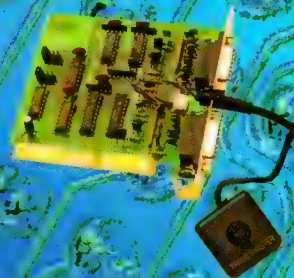
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VR FLIGHT SIM THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Looking Glass Technologies' **Flight Unlimited** simulation is now compatible with the Forte VFX VR headset. The immersive flight sim models the air around the plane for turbulence and shifting currents, to give the pilot the feeling of a 3-D cockpit.

Flights go over actual locations such as Aspen, CO, and Sedona, AZ. There are six planes, and the program guides users through a series of 25 interactive lessons that gradually increase in difficulty.

Jerry Wolosenko, VP and general manager, explained the differences between this and other sims: "For the first time users can fly through actual photo-realistic environments. Speaking as a long-time pilot myself, this

is without question the closest thing you can get to the experience without actually flying a plane."

Flight Unlimited will initially be available only for CD-ROM 486/33 MHz computers, and later for other multimedia platforms. It supports most external flight sticks, yokes, rudder pedals and other VR headmounted displays.

RADIO SHACK SPONSORS ROCK 'N' ROLL MUSEUM

Radio Shack is the first company to sign on as official sponsor of the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and Museum now under construction in Cleveland, OH. The Hall of Fame was established in 1983, to honor the musicians who contributed to the evolution of rock 'n' roll. The museum is a \$92 million,

150,000-square-foot building with exhibits that detail the history of the music and its cultural impact.

Leonard Roberts, Radio Shack's president, explained: "Radio Shack began providing high quality audio products to the American public in the early '50s, just about the same time that rock 'n' roll music was becoming popular. The history of Radio Shack and the history of rock 'n' roll have often converged over the years.

"When you think of the great musical moments in rock 'n' roll, there is a good chance you heard them first on a Radio Shack product."

SF AUTHOR TO WRITE GAMES

Sci-fi writer Paul Wilson and CD-ROM aficionado Matt Costello agreed to pen an

interactive mystery for motion picture producer Interfilm, Inc. The project's working title is *Bombmeister*.

Wilson is the author of the bestseller *The Tomb and the Keep*. Costello authored the script for *The 11th Hour*, the sequel to *The 7th Guest*.

Tony Award-winner Rupert Holmes also signed with Interfilm, Inc. He will write an interactive movie entitled *Maze Island*.

Interfilm CEO Bob Bejan stated, "The projects in development with artists like Matt Costello, Paul Wilson and Rupert Holmes represent the company's goal of bringing great talent to the Interfilm media."

Moviegoers will be in control having the ability to determine the direction the story will go by using buttons on pistol grips on the theater seats.

As of this date the release date for *Bombmeister* has yet to be announced.

CYBER STOCK WATCH: October 1994

The EG home electronic entertainment stock index continued to rally in October, rising 5.8 percent over September, and marking a 30 percent fall season move since the end of July. Investors pursued two basic themes: relief that a good 16-Bit cartridge game still sells well, and overall optimism for a favorable holiday season in the consumer computer industry. The strongest segment performer was the cartridge publishers, up 12 percent over September. Buying interest in Electronic Arts accelerated (up 22 percent) after the launch and strong sell-through of EA's NHL '95 Genesis title, which quickly went to the top of the charts. Furthermore, September sell-through data helped reestablish EA's market share

leadership in computer games (Wing Commander Armada PC CD-ROM, NHL 95 PC CD-ROM), after a summer hiatus. Acclaim's share price helped with a 2.2 percent rise during the month.

Retail stocks rose 8.5 percent during October. Babbages was the strongest, up 10% from September, following several major management presentations to institutions. Many investors view the merger with Software, Inc. favorably, and are anticipating strong results from the consolidation during 1995. PC stocks trailed the overall index with a 3.4 percent gain.

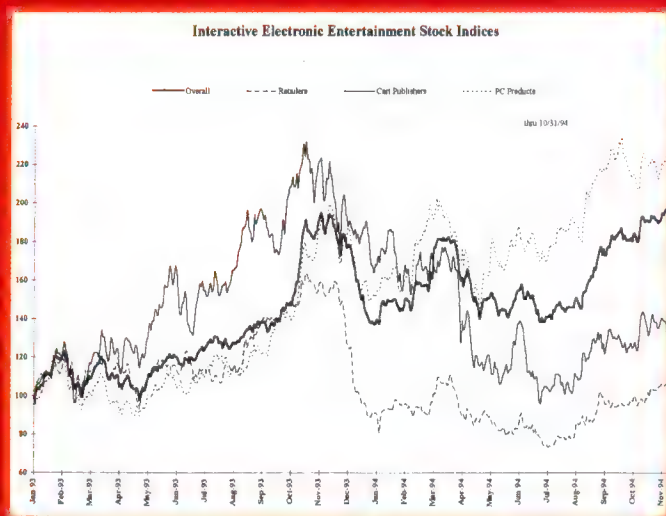
Individual stars were Alias Research (up 28 percent in October and 100 percent since July) which is preparing tool sets for Nintendo's Ultra 64 developers and enjoying accolades for its Hollywood special effects achievements during the summer (i.e., *The Mask*). Sierra and Broderbund also staged 20 percent rallies driven respectively by healthy sell-through of *Outpost* and excellent August year-end results.

Laggards during the month included 3DO (down 21 percent after a controversial royalty fee hike and stock downgrades from several brokerage houses), and Creative Technologies (off 21 percent on concerns that multimedia upgrade kit growth will slow next year). Spectrum Holobyte eroded 1% during the month.

With the holiday season kickoff after Thanksgiving investors need increasingly to shift their focus to sell-through. Retailers are stocked up with product on all formats, advertising campaigns are locked and loaded, and the games are about to begin. Beware of high-profile titles that move sluggishly, and hope the hot ones are always in stock.

John Taylor

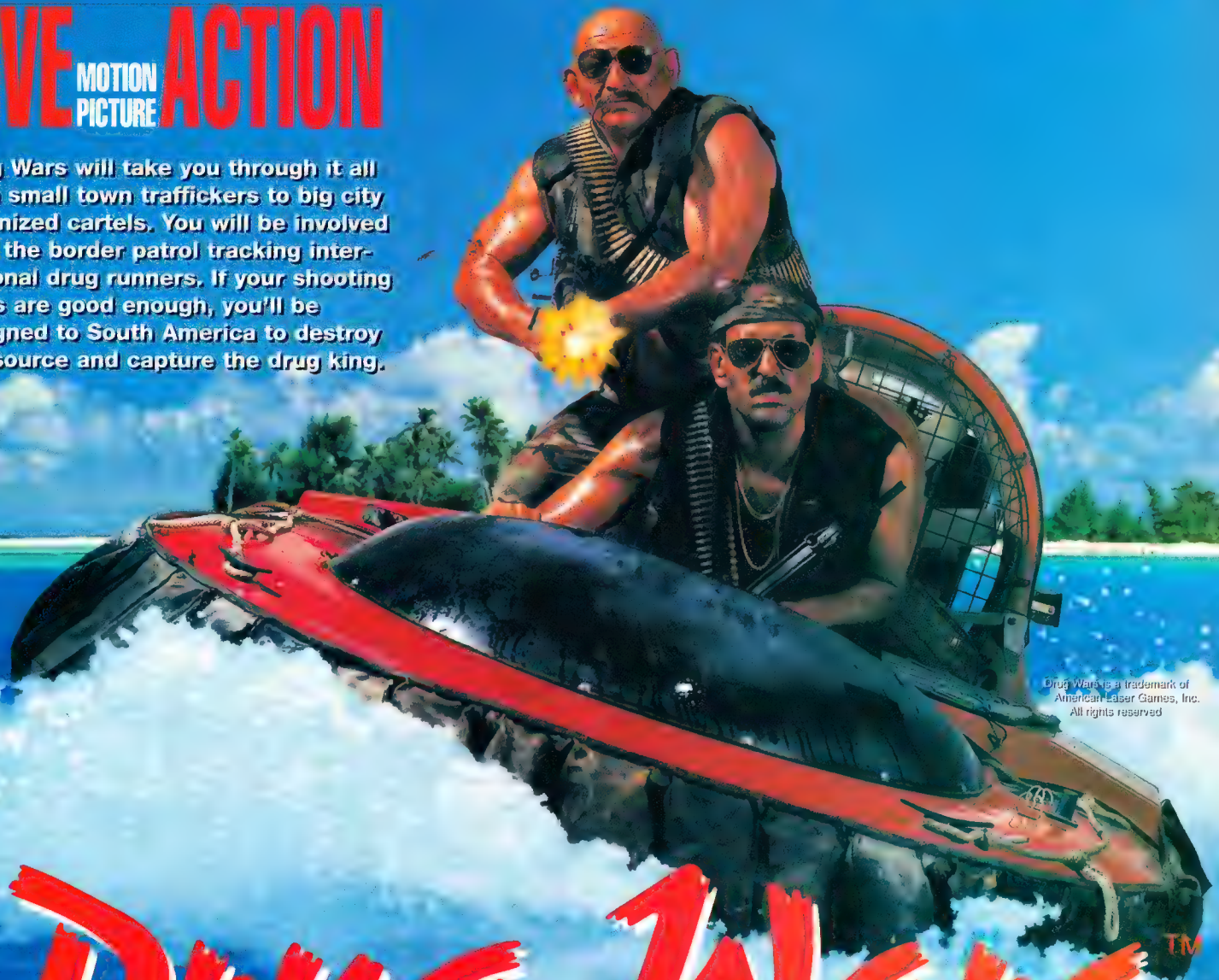
John Taylor is an interactive entertainment industry analyst with L.H. Alton & Company, a San Francisco-based investment banking firm.



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CYBERWATCH

Riding the Internet

There are 100 special effects shots in the picture [the screwball comedy, *Radioland Murders*] and *Jurassic Park* has less than that. Very few pictures have more ... We're developing complete 3-D sets and [are] building less and less. To be able to fill in with more extras and surroundings and do that digitally does change the whole process of making films."

— George Lucas
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Oct. 23, 1994

"In its first week out, Acclaim's *Mortal Kombat II* generated more than \$50 million in retail revenues. That's more than opening-week receipts of the summer's top-grossing films, including *The Mask*, *True Lies*, *Forrest Gump* or *The Lion King* ... and ranks as the largest introduction of a video game in history ... A massive logistical operations effort, 65 trucks, 11 jumbo jets and hundreds of security personnel transported more than 2.5 million *MK II* games from 200 distribution centers to drop-ship to more than 15,000 retail locations. If laid end to end, the initial shipment ... would pave a path from New York to Boston."

— Lip Service Newsletter
(mlmls@aol.com)

"[With the new game rating systems in place] is anybody in stores going to enforce the system and refuse to let little kids buy or rent violent video games? IDSA's Dr. Arthur Prober suggested (in a *RePlay* interview) that enforcement—if any—is up to parents. But according to *USA Today* (9/10), Senators Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl want stores to play morality policeman: the paper said they issued a 'demand' that video stores refuse to rent violent or unrated games to kids under 17. Stores don't want the job, though. The *L.A. Times* says Toys 'R' Us, Target and Wal-Mart 'are not expected, or required to check the age of purchasers.' The Video Game Retailers Assn. (whose members rent and sell tons of



Illustration by Bill Vann

games through the same stores that rent VCR movies) have endorsed ratings, but *USA Today* says video store owners 'will sidestep' a uniform enforcement policy, in favor of letting each retailer deal with the rating in its own way."

— *RePlay* magazine, October, 1994

"The project [*Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time*, a new PC-CD release] was originally intended to be a program that would benevolently infect computers, notably business computers, with something resembling a sense of humor.

"'It started from that premise,' [said Python Terry Gilliam], 'it didn't actually develop that way, but turned into its own thing. I'm not sure what that thing is, except that the title is very accurate. It's on the cutting edge of CD technology, it does things more elaborately

than any CD-ROM does. I still think it's a waste of time, but it's ecologically friendly because it's recycling all this old Python stuff in ways you'd be surprised.'"

— Dennis Michael
Entertainment Retailing Industry
Oct. 15, 1994

"Hundreds of thousands of workers have been gripped by RSI [repetitive stress injuries], and many of them are furious. In the U.S. alone, more than 2,000 have filed lawsuits against the makers of computer equipment. Two big cases—a multimillion dollar suit by four newspaper reporters who developed RSI while using the Atex word-processing system, and a similar challenge to IBM—are expected to go to court this fall."

— *TIME Magazine*, Oct. 24, 1994

Edited by Bill Kunkel



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Interplay

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GAME DOCTOR

The Censorship Upshot

Welcome back, faithful readers, to yet another installment of the Game Doctor. Remember, hereafter, in addition to reaching us through the old fashioned (wheeze) method of writing and mailing a letter, the Doc can be contacted through e-mail. Please address all queries, comments and corrections to: Game Nurse@aol.com and your questions can get here instantaneously!

Now that we've got an office set up on the Infobahn, I don't feel like such an old fogie—despite my advanced age.

By the way, a couple of points to clear up before we get down to this month's questions.

First, I made a reference an issue or two back to a publisher's costs when producing in CD format as opposed to "ROM." Well, as I'm sure most of my astute readers have already guessed, the word "cart" got left off the end of "ROM." Yes, of course CDs also hold ROM (Read Only Memory), but it is the cost of storing it in chip/cartridge format that is so expensive.

Which leads to the obvious question: why do the CD versions of games cost the same as the cartridge versions?

Unfortunately, that is a question that only the guilty publishers can answer. An answer had better be fairly soon forthcoming, because this is a query that seems to be on quite a few minds right just now.

Secondly, to the reader (James Catalano of Chicago, IL) who asked about the origin of the number "2600" as it applied to the old Atari VCS, I have now been told by one source that it was some sort of catalogue number, while another maintains that it had a more specific inspiration, but couldn't remember what exactly that inspiration was. My best source is still out of the country, but I haven't forgotten and will run this answer to ground within the next two

months, okay? Meanwhile, I hope you've gotten your Game Doctor Prize Packet and are enjoying the rewards of this excellent Q!

Now, with the old business out of the way, let's see if we have any room left to actually answer a few questions, eh?

Q: Okay, I've absorbed and fully memorized the extensive, and extremely well-written section you guys did a couple of months back on censorship in gaming, and I've followed the various news reports on the subject ever since.

But here's what I still can't figure out: what's the real upshot for gamers about all this ratings crap? I mean, if a game is rated for Kiddies or Adults, what will it actually mean in terms of me, the player, buying those games? By the way, I am 23, but I would also



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—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.

like to know your answer if I were 16.

**Les Garstien
Kingston, NY**

A: I'll be perfectly straight with you, Les, since you seem to be serious about this issue—and a serious issue it is for all gamers.

Senator Joseph Lieberman wants the rental and retail stores to actively police the sale of

"violent" games to anyone under 17 years of age. The stores, however, as well as the VGRA (Video Game Retailers Association) have no wish to play policeman and have consistently stated that policy will probably be left up to individual store owners to determine.

The broader effect, and the one that you are apt to feel, even at your advanced age, is the Big Chill effect. Just as movies rated NC-17 have a hard time getting theater space, games with an "M" (Mature-17 years or older) may not be carried by entire chains, such as Wal-Mart and Toys 'R Us. This smaller distribution channel will result in one of two things: either new outlets will emerge to handle the non-kiddie material, or more adult games will largely be limited to computers with CD-ROM drives, where they will remain in the ghetto they now occupy.

So, while it's very easy to talk about "suggested ratings" and "guidance for parents," the hard realities of the rating system are that it is very likely to seriously change the current distribution pathways, for better or worse.

Q: Here are my questions: 1) Why are the various companies wasting their time and money making 32- and 64-Bit systems? Many years ago, didn't Sega say to you that they ran up against the limitations of what a regular TV set can display and that they

would have to wait until HDTV came out before they can release a 32-Bit system? 2) Was the Mattel Intellivision a 16-Bit system? 3) What was NEC doing when Atari was king? I know that Sega and Nintendo were making arcade games at the time. Thank you.

**Mark Price
Winnipeg, MB, Canada**

A: You're very welcome, Mark, and here are your answers: 1) Well, it wasn't just Sega which spread that particular notion back in the late '80s; quite a few people felt that way, or at least claimed to, in hopes that the market would remain at 16-Bit for a decent interval of time. All things considered, it has. But just because someone said it doesn't make it so. First off, we very well may not see HDTV in the U.S. in this century. Second, look at any TV show, whether FMV or animation, and it's obvious that existing TV is capable of a greater degree of realism than 16-Bit technology is capable of producing—just check out the 32-Bit 3D0 version of, say, EA Sports' FIFA International Soccer and compare it to the Genesis edition of the same game.

Obviously, 16-Bit isn't the be-all-and-end-all interactive electronic technology, but hey, they tried.

2) Not even close.

3) NEC didn't get into the game business at all until the mid- to late-'80s when it purchased the PC Engine video game technology from Hudson Soft which, after many years and countless screw-ups, was eventually released in the U.S. as the TurboGrafx-16. When the Doc first saw the PC Engine in '87 or so, it was remarkable. Unfortunately, the extended period of time between its development and American roll out doomed the technology, despite its being the first CD-ROM-based video game system sold in this country.

That about wraps things up here at the Doctor's Virtual Office. Remember, my children, to send those Qs either via e-mail or regular, old fashioned mail.

The e-mail address, once again, is Game Nurse@aol.com, while the old fashioned address is:

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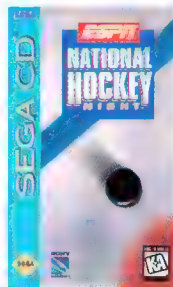
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DOOM



id's Romero and Carmack: Experience and Talent Produce A Great Combination

GAMER OF THE YEAR

John Carmack and John Romero are, arguably, the two hottest talents in the computer industry today. With more than 500,000 copies of their latest game, **Doom II**, selling on the first day of release, even the three people in North America who aren't playing **Doom** have to admit that their impact on gaming is pervasive.

These guys are the invincible winners of the programming world. While **Doom** casts a deep shadow, those with strong memories will recall that the boys from id have been pushing the envelope ever since **Commander Keen** used some pretty nifty page-shifting tricks to create one of the smoothest scrolling games for the PC. Then, of course, there was **Wolfenstein 3D**, which has become something of a cottage industry in itself, with a number of second-party games on the shelves that still use variants on the engine.

It would seem that Romero and Carmack, the programming and design innovators behind all these products, can't produce a loser. The natural question to ask is simple, "Why are these guys so good?"

The answer, to the keen observer, would seem to be a little bit different for each of them.

When **EG** interviewed John Romero, he was seated at his 21-inch monitor, using spastic twitches of his mouse hand to avoid incoming fireballs that had his name on them. The

game he was playing, surprisingly, wasn't **Doom II**. Instead it was a playable demo of **Magic Carpet** from eurodesigners Bullfrog. Questions had to be carefully timed to coincide with lulls in the game action. In a nutshell, that picture seemed to sum up John Romero. Whether playing or programming, he is first and foremost a gamer.

"We do this because we like to play games. When we are programming a game, we are doing it to be able to play it. You get this idea for a great game and you make it because you want to be able to play it, and no one else has done it," Romero says.

John has been making games to amuse himself and others since the early days of personal computing. At the beginning of the '80s he produced games that were printed in computing magazines devoted to the Apple II.

This kind of long-term exposure to the industry is one of the things that Romero feels is a key to his success.

"When you have been doing this for 13 years, and seen every game that has come out in 13 years, you know what is cool and what isn't. You know if an idea is going to work or if it isn't. You just know what is cool," Romero says.

The flip side of this, lack of experience, is one of the things Romero sees as a problem with the industry today.

"When I was learning to program games, my work, my learning experiments, were printed in magazines. If something sucked, then the only thing someone lost was the time to type it in. Now, it seems like too many new programmers, they don't have the experience. Their experiments end up on the shelf. There are games coming out that just aren't good, they are someone's learning process," Romero says.

However, John is also quick to compliment those whom he feels are doing good work.

"There are good games out there. Programming teams with some innovation, who aren't just trying to copy us or some other hot concept." He stops and points briefly at the game

he is playing on his system. "Like Bullfrog with **Magic Carpet**. This takes some of the best elements of a game like **Populous**, uses the first-person view and does some really innovative things with it. It's cool."

Romero's dedication to programming is intense. Like many game programmers, he often worked incredible hours seven days a week. With age and marriage, he has mellowed.

"I have stopped the seven-days-a-week thing, the burnout. Now I go home at night and on the weekends."

However, even when he is at home he still programs, doing the small utility routines for the latest id project. Luckily, his wife is understanding about it.

"As long as I am at home, she's cool."

While Romero represents the long haul commitment, Carmack, the other half of the id programming core, is much newer to gaming. At 24 years old, John Carmack has only been programming six years. He is more the image of the prototypical hot, young programming talent.

"I couldn't start programming till I was 18 and out of the house. So I haven't been doing it as long as Romero," Carmack says.

However, Carmack feels that intense dedication can make a great programmer in a short period of time.

"It is possible for anyone who is willing to dive in every waking hour to make it to the top in this industry quickly. If you are willing to work seven days a week till you pass out at your computer, for a year, you can be a top programmer," Carmack says.

Carmack started programming at a company in Shreveport, LA, where he met Romero. While there, he spent a year working until he was unconscious, trying out new programming techniques and new approaches. At the end of that year, he felt that things had started to come together in his programming.

When Carmack, Romero and some others got together and started id, things weren't immediately roses, however.

"I remember when we bought our first Next station. I literally had to walk two miles through the snow, because my car was broken, to get to the bank to get the money."

Carmack attributes a great deal of id's success to elegance.

"One of the problems in the industry is overdesign. People don't know what they are trying to achieve. I like to design a game with

exactly what it needs to get the point across and no more. That is what makes our games hit on a basic biological level. It is elegant programming. A feature must justify itself. If it doesn't add to the raw coolness of the game, it gets lost," Carmack says.

"Some programmers slam our games as being crude, but they do exactly what we want them to do. They get you in the guts. People seem to like it. Our stake is in the ground pretty firmly now," Carmack says.

Firmly is understating it. With the success of id's games go the spoils, and Romero and Carmack aren't afraid to have fun with their new wealth.

The cars are probably the most famous example. In the parking lot of the building housing id, Carmack and Romero's matching Ferrari Testerosias sit parked side by side. That is, when they aren't out racing them.

"When we go to race, Carmack blows me away," Romero concedes.

If there is a second love after programming in Carmack's life, it has to be cars. With not one, but two Ferraris, the man is definitely a motorhead. However, his current cars aren't quite mean enough. He is having another Ferrari custom built that will end up having a 2400-lb curb weight and push over 1000 hp.

"Yeah, someone needs to tell him speed kills," laughs Romero.

In some ways, Romero and Carmack are more like media stars than programmers. They sign autographs frequently and are recognized by a wide range of people in public. Not something that is normal for most coders.

"On the whole it is annoying. Sometimes it can be pleasant. You know, it is nice to be known by important people and being able to talk to them as peers. But the random man on the street, well, I am not so much into that. Romero loves it, but not me," Carmack said.

The id team has some fans in strange places. Trent Reznor and Nine Inch Nails, for example are fans of **Doom**. They have a LAN on their touring bus to play deathmatches.

"A lot of the guys here got to go backstage at the last NIN concert here and talk to Reznor and it turns out he is really into the game. I missed it. I really want to see him when he is back in town though," Carmack explained.

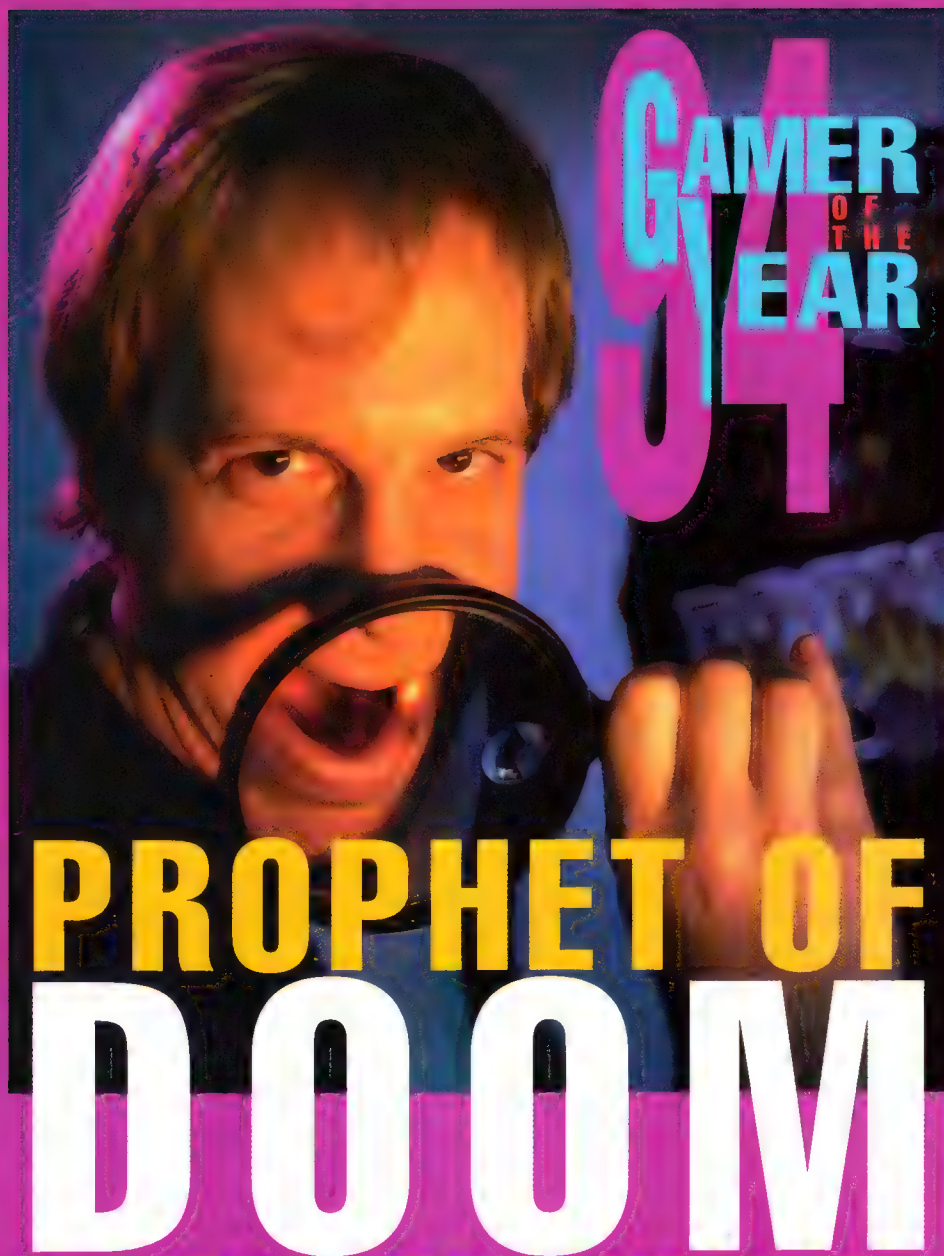
Star quality, cars and money aside, Carmack still works an incredible schedule, referring to himself somewhat jokingly as the taskmaster. Though he does take a couple of weekends off now and again to see his girlfriend.

The two Johns, as the incarnation of the living id, provide a good example of the perfect gamer of the year: experience, incredible work-till-you-drop dedication and most importantly, a deep and abiding love of good games, theirs and others. We at **EG** wish them continuing luck and good fortune in the years ahead.

"It is possible for anyone who is willing to dive in every waking hour to make it to the top in this industry quickly."

—John Carmack





Meet Jay Wilbur: The Man Who Doomed Gaming

He's not the creator of *Wolfenstein 3D* or *Doom*, but it's hard to imagine id Software without Jay Wilbur front and center. To the electronic gaming world, he's the voice of id, the lead singer in the band. He has steered the course that has made id one of the greatest, and most unique, software success stories.

Despite two years in the limelight, Jay is still the same friendly, enthusiastic guy who pulled people off the floor at the Consumer Electronics Show to show them demos of *Wolfenstein 3D*.

One thing that hasn't changed is the vagueness that surrounds his title. "I'm the business manager," Jay told *EG*. That's a little like Napoleon saying, "Oh, I'm an officer in the army." He is listed as CEO on the id corporate papers, a truer indication of his worth to the company. Under any of the four titles he's held, Jay has helped shaped the id vision and, more

importantly, sold it to a skeptical industry.

"id was born out of a group of guys who worked at *Soft Disk*, in Shreveport, LA," Jay explains, referring to one of the magazines-with-disk that flourished in the late 1980s. "Romero and I moved out there in 1980, and John Carmack came to work for *Soft Disk* in 1990." Carmack, Romero and Lane Roth produced games for the disk each month, and Jay managed the general interest PC edition.

Apogee's Scott Miller expressed interest in some of the games, and sent a check to underline that enthusiasm. Carmack, Romero, Roth and Tom Hall began work on *Commander Keen*. Lane Roth left the group early, replaced by Adrian Carmack, but the group became the nucleus of id. (Hall has since left id for Apogee.)

"I was involved with id from the very

beginning," says Jay. "It was born in John Carmack's and my house in Shreveport." Unfortunately, a contractual obligation kept him from joining id officially just before the release of *Wolfenstein 3D* in 1992. Also joining the company from *Soft Disk* at that time was Kevin Cloud, who became a member of the team and, like Wilbur, a minority owner of id.

Jay Wilbur never wavered in his belief that id could progress faster by selling *Wolfenstein 3D* as shareware. "Shareware is not a kind of software, it's a channel," he observes. "Another word for shareware is 'direct.'"

Prior to *Wolfenstein 3D*, shareware looked like a chancy way for a game publisher. Instead of accepting an offer from Sierra On-line, Jay led id into the then-uncharted shareware market. Wilbur's experience as a long-time netizen convinced him of the power of the electronic gaming underground. "I knew when a hot product was placed in its hands, the users would become the greatest sales people." The 10-level free sample led to big mail-order sales for the complete 60-level edition.

Will success spoil id? Jay doesn't think so. "We don't lack for material things," he says, almost sheepishly, "but we're such a wacky bunch I don't think we'll develop the snob mindset." For the record, he drives a Corolla.

The secret of Jay's success may be that he's a hardcore gamer who has every system. He frequently plays video games and, yes, *Doom II*, with the elder of his two sons, 4-1/2-year old Joshua. (Nicholas, at 18 months, has still not picked up the controller in earnest.)

Jay sees no lack of direction for the future as id starts work on *Quake*, the next generation from *Doom*. "We looked at *Wolfenstein 3D* and took everything that was great in that game, like the 3D stuff, and improved it a hundredfold for *Doom*," says Jay. "So we're looking at what's best in *Doom II*, and we'll amplify those qualities a hundredfold for *Quake*!"

That's a tall order for a company that Jay characterizes as "10 fun-loving guys." It's impossible to talk to Jay Wilbur, however, and not come away with a feeling that if any publisher can take gaming to the next level in 1995, it's id Software. — Arnie Katz





A VISIT AT THE ID OFFICE

The entire day that **EG** was at id software, fairly steady screams, punctuated with occasional maniacal laughter, came from behind the closed office door right behind the receptionist desk. Finally, by the end of the day, curiosity overcame our dread, and we had to ask someone about the noises.

"Oh, yeah, that's Steve and American. It's like that all the time, except, of course, when they feed the lizards," said Kevin Cloud, a computer artist.

"Man, you should really see them feed the lizards. It's gross. The lizards eat mice," chimed in David Taylor, a Unix specialist.

"Yeah, mice and crickets. The crickets aren't bad, but when they feed them the mice, it isn't pretty," Cloud said.

"I like crickets," Taylor replied.

"Yeah, but it doesn't compare to the mice."

"Good point."

The conversation continued along this vein for some time, detailing the complex process required to feed Geccos.

This is not your everyday normal software company.

The conversation about the mice, for example, was held in the main work room at id's Dallas offices, and at no point during the day were the lights turned on. All

illumination came from the glowing CRT monitors, lending a slightly twisted glow to everything in the room, most particularly the perfect miniatures of the monsters used in **Doom II**.

The small replicas of everyone's favorite demons were used in the making of the game. Instead of simply creating the demons in a computer art package, digitized video footage of the monsters was used to lend realism to the game. Now the creatures are just a fitting part of the background in the design room.

In the main common room that connects the various offices, there is still no mistaking id for any other software house. A

full-sized pool table covered with bits of technojunk and pizza boxes dominated the area. Against one wall a leather couch had a sleeping bag on it. Sonically punctuating the fact that just because you weren't listening to American and Steve scream didn't mean that you were in Kansas, Nine Inch Nails came hammering at about 100 watts out from the edges of John Carmack's closed office door.

Focusing on Carmack's door caused one to notice another door, this one off its hinges, pushed off to the side of the main lobby. It had a huge hole hacked in the center of it.

John Carmack explained.

"Well, Romero's door jammed one day. He was in his office and was trapped in there, and we couldn't get the door open. It was after-hours, so we couldn't call building maintenance, and we were all standing around trying to figure out what to do, when it occurred to me, and I said, 'You know, I do have a battle axe in my office.'"

At that point, the entire id team stood around chanting "battle axe!" while Carmack got the battle axe out of his office and used it to hack through the offending door.

The battle axe in question wasn't your normal battle axe (if there can be such a thing as a normal battle axe in modern society) but a \$5,000, razor-edged chrome battle axe Carmack had custom made.

"Yeah, this thing really works," Carmack said, hefting the blade with a glint in his eye.

With this kind of an environment, it might not come as any surprise that id doesn't do things like most other companies when it comes to development.

For instance, when building a new computer game, the standard procedure is for the designers to sit around and decide what they are going to build: what options are going to be in the game, what the screens will look like and so on. As the project is fleshed out, every element of the project will be relegated to the design document until finally it becomes a huge blueprint for all the elements that will be in the game. Then dates are

attached to the various programming tasks outlined in the document.

At id, however, the concept of a design document is considered decidedly retro.

"Nah, we don't use a design document. We just get together, figure out the game framework, what technology fits the framework, and then we make it," Romero said.

The guiding framework here is cool. Cool is the operative word at id, and during any given day it will be used about 100 times.

"We just keep putting in cool stuff. Then we play it, take out everything that isn't cool and ship it," Romero continued.

During this process, most of the programming and design decisions will be made by Romero and Carmack. Then Adrian Carmack (no relation), the main art guru at id, and the rest of the art and programming team work to flesh out the product.

"We have the advantage that we focus on just one game at a time, and all our resources go to producing one awesome game," Romero said.

This wouldn't work at a larger company, but with less than 20 employees total, and no plans to expand, everyone at id can keep close tabs on progress and changes in the project.

Of course, this isn't the way that most companies work. One of the biggest differences, from the industry point of view, is that with no design document and its rigid dates, there isn't a specific ship date.

This could be a cause of great angst for some suit types.

"Well, there were some hassles in the beginning, but our direction tends to change like the wind, and we have all our contracts worked around to take that into account,"



The "Mancubas" from the original model to the final product. Also pictured in the top right corner is the original "Revenant" model.

said Jay Wilbur, the business guy for id.

Another strange thing about id (and they pile up every time you look around) is the fact there is very little secrecy involved. In an industry currently noted for needing an industrial espionage specialist just to confirm the title of a new product, id is notably casual about their technology and plans. Find another company in the industry, for example, that not only tolerates hacking of their product, but actually encourages it.

Part of the reason for this causal attitude is that after a product is finished, id has no proprietary information to hide relating to their next project. Instead of the popular trend of building an engine and then milking it for every game it can produce, id makes each new game from scratch. From the utilities on up, each id product is brand-new technology. This keeps them from getting stale and lets them incorporate the newest technology trends into each product.

And what is this with the name id, anyway? The name would seem to perfectly sum up the total of the team and product it represents. Here are a bunch of pretty do-it-now kind of guys (heck, do YOU keep a battle axe in your office?) with a hit game

"In an industry currently noted for needing an industrial espionage specialist just to confirm the title of a new product, id is notably casual about their technology and plans."

based on blowing away everything on the screen that moves. Was it planned that way?

Well, not really. When the company started, with a slightly different cast of characters, the name was Ideas From the Deep, or IFD. When the programming team shuffled, they dropped the F, to make id. The fact that it turned out to be fitting was just serendipity.

All of the oddness aside, there is a feeling of rightness in this team and the way they work. Take Jay Wilbur, for example. While being a business manager at most software companies would entail being a powersuit, Wilbur dresses casually and laughs and romps around the office just like everyone else.

When someone commented on how well he fit in, Wilbur just laughed.

"These guys would turn a suit into a bloody stump," he stated. While they might not be the industry average, it was obvious that something at id works, and works right. Without worrying about appearances or hitting a demographic, id manages to turn out games that, in their own words "are cool and don't suck." If it takes a battle axe or two to keep them happy, well, I don't think any of us in the gaming public will hold that against them. (*John P. Withers*)



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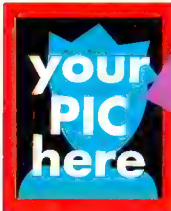
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NEWS OF '94

The Top Headlines of 1994 and What They Mean To Gamers

It was a year of turmoil and change, as the leading lights of gaming jockeyed their companies into better competitive positions. The unrelenting march of technology advanced gaming's standards, while bringing it more into the mainstream of popular culture.

Here are the top stories of '94 that will influence the course of our hobby for years to come.

Games Rated

The move toward game censorship that started in 1993 turned into a full-scale Congressional inquiry, headed by Senator Lieberman. The industry responded with not just one, not two ... but four separate rating systems, from Nintendo, Sega, the Software Publishers Assn. and the Interactive Developers Software Assn.

The ratings all agree in one respect: they tell prospective buyers what to expect when purchasing a game. Parents can determine the suitability of each product, depending on their own child's age.

The downside: the strong possibility that games not given a General Audience-type rating may end up being snubbed by distributors and retail chains.

The introduction of ratings also enabled an increase in adult games.

Data East Wins Capcom Suit

Capcom's long-running suit against Data East ended when the courts decided Capcom's *Street Fighter II* technology was not infringed by Data East. There's a certain poetic justice here, since Data East is the company that started the side-view, one-on-one fighting game genre with *Karate Champ*.

A different outcome would have made it difficult for any company to make this type

of fighting games except Capcom.

Spokesmen for that company had indicated intent to seek infringement damages from every company with that style of game.

Other legal actions helped define the parameters of software development. Comptons tried, and failed, to patent the search techniques used in multimedia encyclopedias. The outcome of the attempt opened the legal gates

for scores of database products on everything from UFOs to gardening.

Microsoft loosened its menacing stranglehold on computer operating systems by ending the royalty PC manufacturers were required to pay, whether or not they used MS-DOS. The result of this action by Microsoft will be the introduction of possibly many new systems from the PC-clone manufacturers.



Hollywood Comes To Gameland

This category could have made the Top News Story article almost every year since the birth of electronic games, but at no time has the move been as pronounced as in 1994.

Movie studios rushed to start their own gaming companies, made deals with software publishers, provided actors to developers with the cooperation of both SAG and ASCAP and even created movies from games. This talent crossover from movies to gaming will continue into the future. The installed base of computers makes gaming an attractive venue for entrepreneurial dollars from Hollywood.

Movies on disk became a reality in 1994 when Philips, IBM and GameTek

each launched lines of films on CD disk. But it's hard to know whether this will continue indefinitely or dip into slow periods of growth. It's anybody's guess whether computerists want to watch movies on their monitors.

To return the favor, 1994 was the year that game companies marched on Hollywood to put games on film. Capcom underwrote the *Street Fighter* movie, a film based on *Double Dragon* was released, and Capstone started work on the *Body Count* movie.

But don't expect a flood of movies based on games; the high cost of production will prohibit most companies from this effort.

Jaguar Gets Sega Boost

Sega and Atari settled their legal differences out of court. Sega agreed to pay Atari large sums of money, enough to finance Atari's pre-holiday ad campaign for the Jaguar, and many other considerations that leave the First Company of Electronic Gaming financially solvent, Sega with the unrestricted right to continue using many Atari patents, and the companies agreeing to work together on software deals in the future.

It wasn't the biggest year for hardware introductions. No new game consoles appeared. The 3DO actually appeared at the end of 1993, while Sega's Saturn, Nintendo's Ultra 64 and Sony's PlayStation are scheduled to debut in 1995. But there were other very significant hardware advances.

Nintendo introduced the Super Game Boy, which lets players run Game Boy software on TV screens (through the SNES), so they're playable in large size and full color. The product is designed to revitalize Nintendo's portable game market, but it's too soon to know how successful it will be.

At the end of the year, Sega introduced its 32X, to upgrade the capability of its 16-Bit Genesis to 32-Bit. Although there's a limited amount of software available so far, the substantial improvement in speed and graphics makes it likely the 32X plug-in device will find an audience among Genesis owners.

Much of the hardware activity for the year was in peripherals, such as the Activator vest. The Activator provides physical reaction to the player's on-screen actions. For example, if an on-screen fighter is hit, the vest provides a thump to the gamer. It's far from the feelies predicted by science fiction, but it's a first step in physically immersive home gaming.

Virtual reality were the words on everyone's lips in 1994, but there's limited amounts of it for the home market. Several software developers created products that provide the realistic 3-D world environment needed for use with head-mounted VR helmets. Unfortunately, the helmets are among the most desired, yet scarcest of the new introductions. Still pricey, they haven't attained much market penetration.

The technology being perfected now will soon filter down to lower priced units. Look for this kind of gaming to come to the forefront in 1995-96.

Viacom's Blockbuster Deals

Viacom made a series of deals that turned the company into one of the most important players in the interactive entertainment industry. The company's acquisitions started with Paramount and ended with Blockbuster. Early in 1994, Viacom purchased Paramount, and Blockbuster purchased Virgin Interactive Entertainment. Later in the year, Viacom purchased Blockbuster. The end result is that Viacom now owns the whole package, including Virgin's star development house, Westwood Studios. This positions Viacom as one of the strongest in the industry, with top talent and distribution and an incredible bank of intellectual properties to use as game subjects.

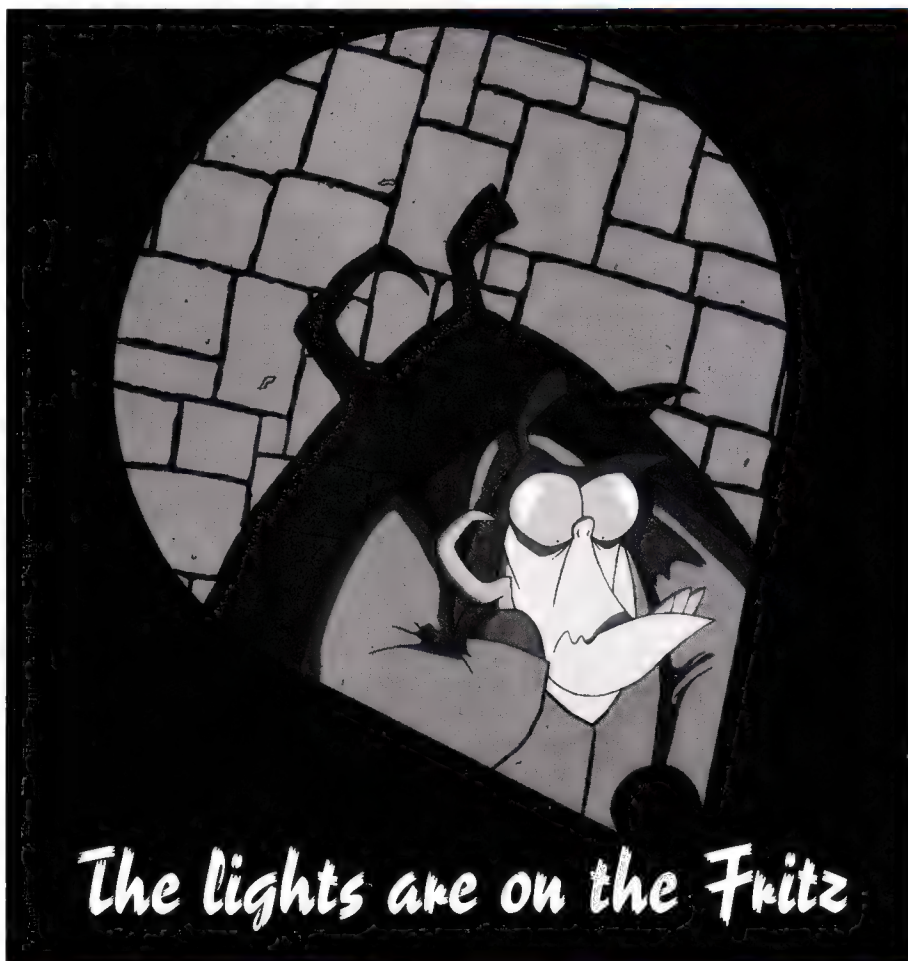
The Mindscape/Software Toolworks/SSI amalgamation (see *Hotline* in this issue) gathered some of the most famous action, war and fantasy game developers under one large banner, and has managed to move the company in a better position for the 1995 marketplace.

Multimedia Multiplies

The number of multimedia setups reached enormous numbers in 1994. Computerist enthusiasts flocked to add CD-ROM drives to existing equipment, and most new computer sales included CD players.

The impact of the huge market of new owners started many game companies down the development trail for CD-ROM products, as the new media replaced the floppy disk in popularity. At the same time, CD-ROM drives got faster, double, triple and even quadruple speed drives made information access faster than it had ever been, enabling bigger, more colorful, faster games with more sound and music than ever before.

Multimedia will continue to be the computerist's medium-of-choice in 1995-'96. Most games will make their initial appearance on CD rather than floppy disk, and some will never find their way to the older medium.



The lights are on the Fritz

Donkey Kong Barrels Over Graphics

Nintendo's introduction of **Donkey Kong Country**, with graphics created on Silicon Graphics, Inc. technology, was a new lease on life for 16-Bit gaming. It used top-of-the-line techniques to produce stunning visuals. Many players who had given up on the SNES while waiting for the Ultra 64 had to take another look.

Technological advances created the most dramatic computer imagery ever seen. Top hardware and software companies such as Silicon Graphics, Sun Microsystems,

Wavefront and 3-D Studio created ultra-realistic looks for games like **Myst**, **11th Hour**, **Rebel Assault**, **Dust** and **Critical Path**.

Acclaim invested heavily in graphic techniques, including expanding their own Advanced Technologies Group that is utilizing Acclaim's motion capture system. In a first for video game companies, Acclaim's technology was tagged for use in the next *Batman* movie.

Tsunami put the player in the action with Video Injection technology in **Blue Force**. The process of inserting the user's digitized image into games is unlikely to become prevalent until more gamers add video cameras to their computer setups. Additional products of this type are on the drawing boards of several companies.

Other companies developed new techniques for using movies in interactive entertainments. Hollywood actors and actresses made their mark on games in productions like **Under A Killing Moon** and **Wing Commander III**.

Fancier, more complex graphics, using both animation techniques and movies, will continue to dominate gaming in 1995 as more companies make the financial investment in top-of-the-line workstations, animators and movie techniques.

On-Line Gaming Takes Off

Games went ballistic on the on-line services as millions of Americans signed on to telecommunications groups like America Online, Prodigy, Imagination Network and CompuServe.

The on-line areas' attractions increased, with more entertainment offerings. There have never been as many games available for gamers to demo and test as in 1994. At the same time, new interfaces were introduced to make on-line access easier and more attractive.

Modem play also ended many people's

hunt for qualified opponents. There's a level of excitement to human competition that can't be matched by the artificial intelligence of a computer opponent.

There was an unparalleled number of telecommunication deals in 1994, as entertainment companies made products available, signed participation agreements and in general, courted the on-line audience.

Sega and Nintendo will soon be part of the telecommunication crowd. Both the Genesis and SNES will have Catapult modems in 1995, so video gamers can connect to play.



Everybody's Getting Smarter

Edutainment products were issued in a torrent last year. Sales in this sector increased more than any other form of software, and everybody was quick to jump on the educational bandwagon.

Schools all over America beefed up their computer-education programs. At the same time, more computerists decided to use the equipment for home education.

The result is burgeoning sales—but maybe not as burgeoning as the number of software packages released. It is possible that this oversaturation of the market with edutainment products will result in losses for some companies.

The Year In Review

So that's it; the most exciting, dramatic, surprising year in the history of electronic games!

The entire gaming industry experienced upheaval and fluctuation in 1994. The ratings hearings turned video gaming on its collective ear. The increase in multimedia signaled a new era. The alternate methods of getting games, by cable and on-line, were harbingers of what the future holds; it seems likely these entertainment-on-demand methods will eventually dominate gaming distribution.

I'll predict that 1995 will be an even more impressive year for interactive electronic entertainment.

Games On Demand On Cable TV

In 1994, the Sega Channel started delivering games via cable in test locations around the country. The up-and-coming service downloads games for unlimited plays, for a regular monthly service fee. The Sega Channel plans to go national in 1995.

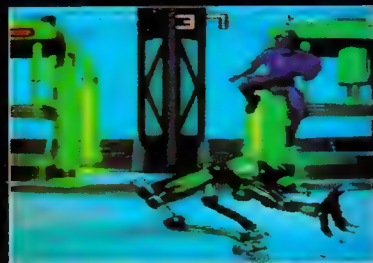
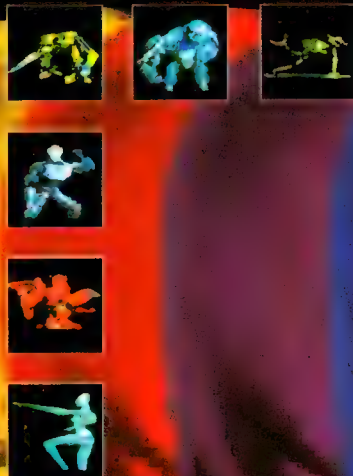
Nintendo is watching the results of the Sega Channel very closely and will probably start a similar cable-connected game service next year.

Other companies also are watching the Sega test. Even Microsoft is interested in cable delivery of entertainment products, and has announced there will be some kind of cable trial in 1995.

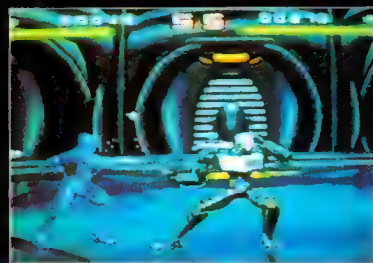
Entertainment on demand will no doubt play a very important part of the Information Highway, on cable and on-line. This form of interactive gaming will continue to grow in 1995 and beyond.

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HORRORS OF CRISTANINA

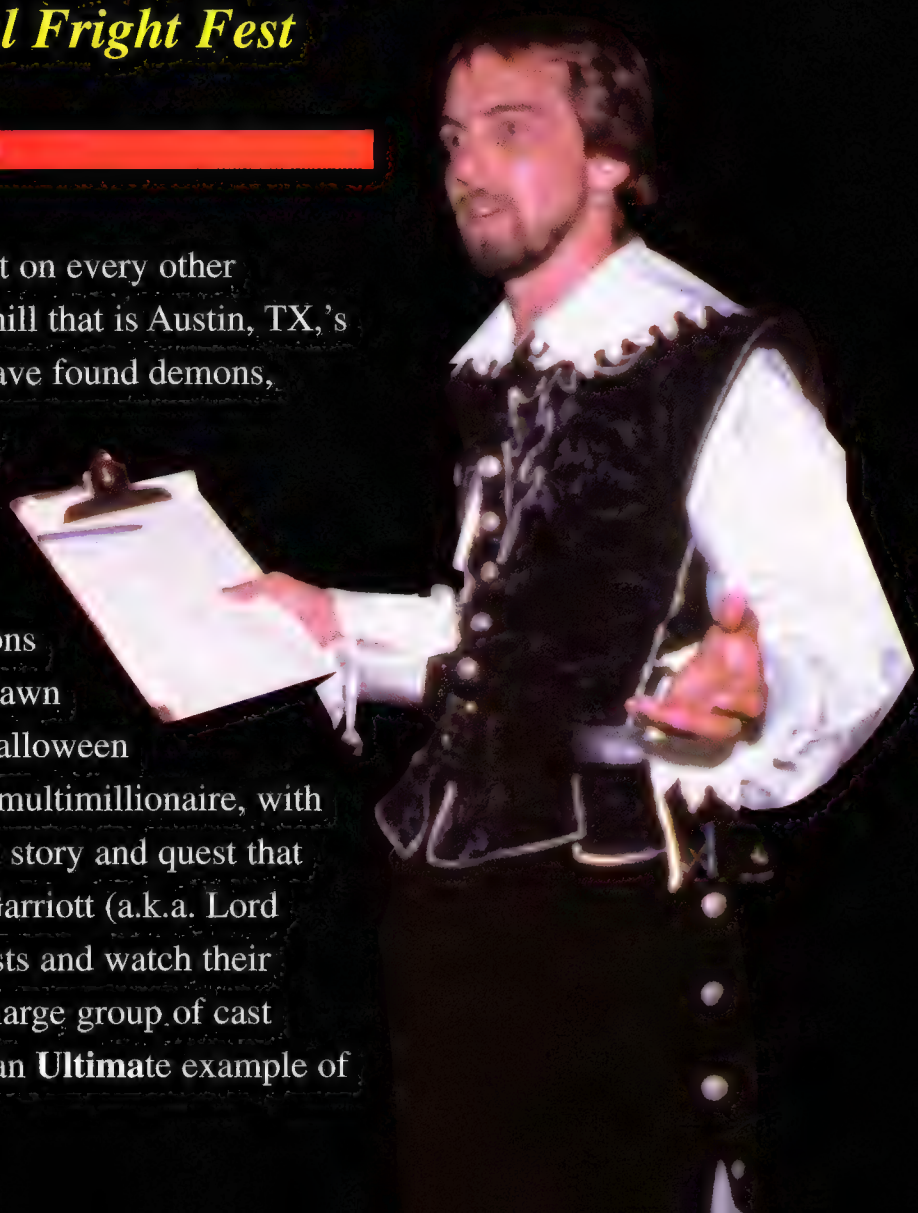


MANOR

Our ace reporter goes behind the scenes at Lord British's biennial Fright Fest

By Russ Ceccola

A tree may grow in Brooklyn, but on every other Halloween since 1988, atop a hill that is Austin, TX,'s highest natural point, people have found demons, monks and other fantastical creatures coming out of the ground of Richard Garriott's elaborate Britannia Manor. Halloween has always been the setting for Garriott's transformations of his unusual house and landscaped lawn to a live, interactive adventure. For Halloween 1994, the **Ultima** series designer and multimillionaire, with hundreds of volunteers, put together a story and quest that would work at any time of the year. Garriott (a.k.a. Lord British) likes to open his gates to guests and watch their reaction to the events that he and the large group of cast members and technicians produce as an **Ultimate** example of interactive theater.



A view of the moat, island and boat that carried guests across the River Styx.



Britannia Manor 1994: Descent In Darkness was no simple project. This explains why it only happens when Garriott can afford the months away from his game designs to devote to the live adventure. Volunteers put in between 15,000 and 20,000 hours of construction time starting in August. More than 350 people helped in the construction of the adventure. It took 200 cast members and technicians to run the event on operating nights. Britannia Manor is not cheap either. Garriott fronted over \$100,000 of his own money while Origin Systems and FCI kicked in about \$15,000 and \$5,000 respectively from their funds.

High End Systems, a major sound equipment company in the Austin area, contributed \$350,000 of sound and light equipment to the project. Their chief lighting technician estimated what they would need to pull off the effects and High End Systems actually had to manufacture new equipment because their rental stock simply wasn't enough to handle the event.

The Zachary Scott Theater Company contributed costumes and its talent for the adventure, selling tickets each night as a benefit. The Society for Creative Anachronism also provided cast members. Acting coach John Duncan came down from Washington, DC, to help the cast, and local experienced prosthetics and makeup artist Josh Logan produced the many masks and applied makeup nightly as he did for Britannia Manor 1992. With all this talent, it's obvious that the group succeeded in their goal "to up the quality of the experience

this year," as Garriott put it.

Although Garriott tends to receive all the attention for Britannia Manor because the house and grounds are his, Greg Dykes is Garriott's right-hand man who keeps things going. He took up to two months off to produce the adventure with Garriott. His company, Custom Creation, built many of the larger props in the adventure, particularly those that required mechanical devices or hydraulics like



the false preacher's rising pulpit and a collapsing ceiling in a dark room. Dykes is a long-time friend of Garriott's (Dupré in the *Ultima* games was modeled after and looks like him) and routinely flew to New England every year to help him create his much smaller and less ambitious, but still exciting, "spook houses." Dykes actually got to go through the adventure for the first time this past year at a time when everything was working perfectly, and remarked that "although I knew the plot of the story and helped construct virtually every station of the adventure, I was still quite impressed by the overall experience and the quality of the acting and the special effects."

Some of these effects included fire: the theme of the 1994 Britannia Manor was very Dante-ish and hellbound. A fissure in the front yard from which flames emanated throughout the night used fuel from a 200-gallon propane tank. A similar tank heated Garriott's pool from which some cast members reached out at guests. Two hot air balloon coils with 100-gallon tanks each warmed those guests who stood before Minos for judgment, while a volcano of unleaded fuel produced fireballs a few feet behind them. Nineteen fog machines and a large supply of smoke made of glycerine and water (that "smells like haunted house" according to Garriott) permeated the grounds of the estate.

Power was a major problem for Britannia Manor in past years. In 1994, Garriott discovered that he only had 50 percent of the power he needed for the adventure with his 280 amp service in his house, 200 amp service in his barn and 200 amps from the neighbor next door. "I don't borrow a cup of sugar from my neighbors, I borrow their power," Garriott joked. His patient neighbors also allowed him to park a 600-amp trailer in their driveway for him to complete his power requirements. Even with all this power available, the adventure managed to blow the circuit breaker in Garriott's house for about 10 minutes on the Saturday night before Halloween. The solution was to cool the breaker with CO2. The end result was a working circuit breaker encased in a block of ice from the CO2 until they could fix it in the morning!

Despite the level of effort that the volunteers exhibited in the creation of Britannia Manor, only as many as 996 guests experienced the incredible adventure. Groups of four people were admitted every four minutes on operating nights for about four hours. Prospective adventurers who knew about past Britannia Manors and heard about the 1994 one began camping out almost a week before the first night of the adventure. They organized their own ordered list of lucky people who

Behold the ominous
Lord of The Inferno.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT BRITANNIA MANOR...

by Russ Ceccola

The Adventure Itself

The story behind Britannia Manor had nothing to do with any of Garriott's *Ultima* games. The only tie to the game was the overall goal—save the Avatar, who in this case was present for the first time, portrayed by an actress.

The Avatar is trapped in hell. Guides near the entrance to hell instruct guests that they must save the Avatar and can only do so if they ignore all occupants of the inferno, except for the similarly robed monks.

Once inside the house, groups cross a rope bridge over a pool and survive an encounter with "Jeffrey," the embodiment of all serial killers who ever lived. Jeffrey doesn't accept the guests because they are not dead, so he sends them to Minos for judgment, as all citizens of hell must be judged. On the way to the River Styx, parties encounter an enormous, flatulent bishop (dubbed "Jabba the bishop" by cast members) who tricks them. After exiting the house, guests find some gold in a shack in the woods and pay their passage across the River Styx.

After a boat ride around a moat, guests stand before a particularly caustic character named Minos, who judges them harshly among hot flames and fireballs before he dispatches them to a crypt. A monk in the crypt reveals the location of a gem rumored to be the Star of Palestine, a special gem necessary to save the Avatar from the Lord of the Inferno. After exiting the crypt, guests encounter the boogeyman, are taken for an unexpected cart ride and meet a mad woman.

After a new guide helps the guests trick Medusa with a mirror, they get her gem and in the next room, the group receives a clue that reveals which of the gems they possess is the real Star of Palestine. The party must then trick three witches with the fake gem and visit Imhotep, an ugly yellow creature who reveals the location of the key to unlock the Avatar's chains. With a gem and a key, guests enter the finale room in which they either win or lose depending on which gem they give the witches. The finale involves a giant, cloven-hoofed creature and the Avatar's death or redemption in an audio-visual treat.

Experiences as a Volunteer

I decided to help the cast and crew of Britannia in any way I could since I had already been through the adventure the night before. After some odd jobs around the house and grounds, the casting director

sent me to join a crew responsible for pushing a cart full of misled guests down a driveway to slam it into foam cushions against the house. The guests had to undergo this before they could return to the house.

This had to be one of the most fun jobs of the adventure, despite the work it took to push the cart down the driveway and back again. Two people pushed the cart the entire length of the driveway while two others "started" the cart and a driver, strapped in with a seat belt atop the cart, guided it back and forth down the driveway. We took turns pushing the cart in five pairs so that the same people didn't get too tired pushing the cart every four minutes. The best part was scaring the people inside the cart once they entered and the door was slammed shut. They didn't expect to be inside a cart and were even more surprised when they heard our taunts inches from their ears on the other side of the wooden boards of the contraption.

It was ironic that I was placed on cart duty because when I went through the adventure someone fell out of the cart and was the only recorded "kill" (injury) in bright white letters on the outside of the cart. When Mark Hamill of *Star Wars* and *Wing Commander III* fame was in the cart, we all chanted "stay on target" a la the Death Star trench run and my partner Andrew and I gave him a rough ride. I can't wait for the next Britannia Manor!

Stars' Experiences in Britannia Manor

Lucky for them that Mark Hamill, John Rhys-Davies and Ginger Lynn Allen were in Austin, TX, to promote *Wing Commander III* on Halloween weekend, because all three were able to go through the Britannia Manor adventure. Allen said after the adventure, "It was the most amazing thing I have ever experienced—and I have the bruises to prove it!"

Rhys-Davies, who stands well over six feet tall, had a tough time maneuvering through the knee-high passages and crawlways, but had a great time overall. Hamill, whose party won the adventure, didn't know at the end whether he had won or lost because the fast pace of the adventure threw him for a loop. In the room that squishes guests between two foam walls and flips them into the end game room (known as the "squish-boom"), Hamill was heard to say, "C-3PO, get us out of here" after the walls closed in.

could enter through Garriott's gates beyond the guardian gargoyles. More than 30,000 people were turned away. Garriott expects that his next adventure won't take place for at least three years and probably won't be at his house. People can only hope that he is able to free up the time in his schedule to produce another adventure soon. Until then, the lucky few who earned admittance into Britannia Manor, much like the children in Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, have unforgettable memories of demons, the River Styx and crawling on their hands and knees through tight spaces and maze-like passages.

Descent in Darkness

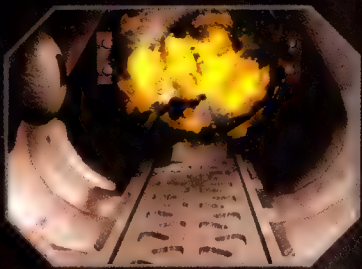
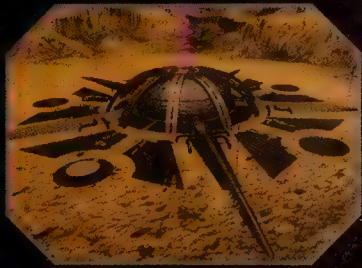
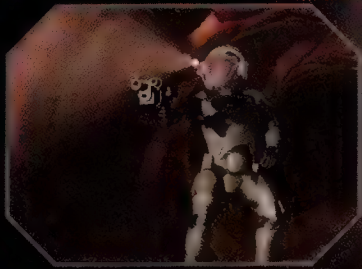


Britannia Manor

Admit One Guest October 29, 1994

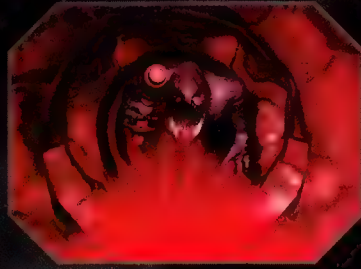
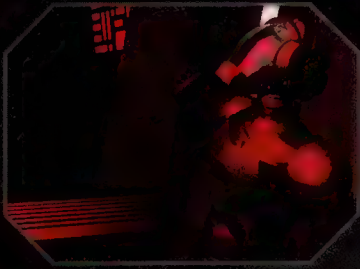
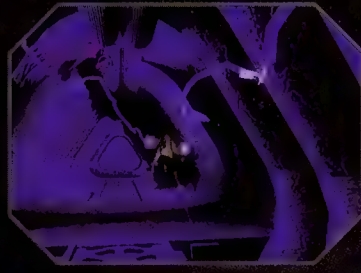
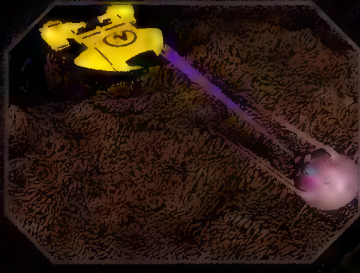
Guests were summoned to the horrific event with one of these lavish invitations.

THE RULES ARE SIMPLE.

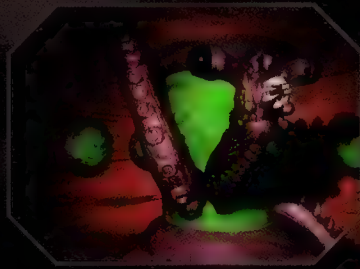
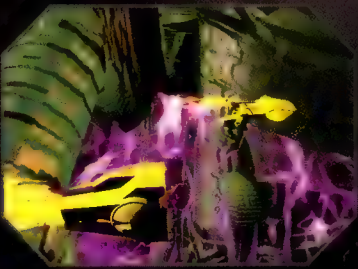


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Or is it one of those really ugly things that we don't even want to mention?



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ACCORDING

The CEO of 3DO Discusses His

by Steven L. Kent

Trip Hawkins, the president and CEO of 3DO, may be described in many ways; but charming, smooth and persuasive should always be high on the list. With an undergraduate degree from Harvard and an MBA from Stanford, Hawkins was one of the first 100 employees hired by Apple Computers. The team he led designed the first graphic interface used by Apple, and one of the team's members created the first mouse.

In 1982, Hawkins founded Electronic Arts, the computer game and sports simulation company that sets many standards for electronic interactive entertainment. Under his direction, EA became a leading software publisher for multiple platforms, including the very important Sega Genesis, SNES and IBM PC. Still a leading shareholder in the

company, he stepped down from day-to-day participation in EA affairs in July, 1994, to devote full-time attention to 3DO, his latest venture into high-tech entertainment.

The 3DO Interactive Multiplayer system, manufactured by Panasonic, was first released in October of 1993. Originally priced at \$699, 3DO met with an unenthusiastic reception. Over the next year, Panasonic incrementally lowered the price of the system to \$399 as several excellent software titles hit the market. By the second half of 1994, sales began to improve. While all of their competitors endured a drop in business during the third quarter of 1994, 3DO had its best sales ever.

Hawkins estimates that Electronic Arts has produced software for around 25 different formats. During that time he has seen many

new platforms fail and has had the opportunity to analyze the cause of their failure. "I've gotten to see what their strategies were, what they did right and what they did wrong," says Hawkins. "I've seen quite a bit of history."

Determined to repeat his success at Electronic Arts, Hawkins has applied his experiences toward the success of 3DO. During a recent interview, he discussed his company's philosophy and revealed how he sees his competition.

Trip on the introduction of the 3DO

"I was disappointed that the hardware didn't sell better when it first came out,"

REALD

ING TO TRIP

Company and His Competition

admits Hawkins. "I've been in this business for an awfully long time, and I've found that the early adopters are very good at identifying good new technology, and they are not particularly price-sensitive about it.

"One of the things that changed last year was that there was so much confusion about what to expect. By August, 1993, Sony had announced the PSX, Nintendo had announced Project Reality and Sega had announced the Saturn.

"Even then Nintendo was saying it would be a \$250 product. They hadn't even started manufacturing them yet, so claiming it was a \$250 product, in my opinion, was pretty facetious.

"It [Nintendo's announcement] created a lot of confusion and it established in people's

minds that this really hot new technology should cost about \$250. At that time Nintendo was trying to be vague about whether or not their new system would have a CD included. Several months later they said 'oh no, there's no CD in that system.'

"So in other words, there was a FUD factor (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt) created by our competitors' announcements. It made the consumers a little more judgmental. They wanted to see what software was available and judge the system based on that. Historically, there's not a lot of software whenever a new system comes out."

"I was just a little disappointed relative to the amount of power that a 3DO machine has. I truly believe that the machine is worth \$699."

Trip on creating a standard versus being a manufacturer

Though the system is called the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer system, 3DO does not actually manufacture it. In fact, as of November, four other companies manufacture 3DO hardware. Panasonic was the first company to bring the system to retail, releasing the REAL in October, 1993. In November of 1994, Goldstar released its own 3DO console. That same month, Creative Labs, makers of Sound Blaster, introduced a 3DO board for PC computers. (Sanyo makes a 3DO for Japan, but no announcements have been made about introducing that product into U.S. markets.)

The whole gaming world in his hands? Maybe, if the 3DO proves to be victorious in the systems war.



"If every manufacturer makes a proprietary system, you'll have a very confusing world with very confused customers. When you have four manufacturers all making the same system, it means there's going to be a whole lot more product available and more competition. More competition not just among the hardware guys but also among the retailers. Retailers are not very happy traditionally if there's one company that has a lot of power over them."

Tip on the competition

The Philips CD-i

"I don't view CD-i as an important competitor. I have a lot of respect for Philips in terms of their size and their strength and what they've been able to accomplish with the CD-i; but CD-i is a 10-year-old architecture. It's not pointed toward the future. We're pointed toward the future, and our competition is other people who are going to be pointed toward the future."

The Atari Jaguar

"I don't take Atari that seriously because even with the additional \$90 million [won in a settlement with Sega], they don't have enough money to do what they need to do. This is a \$500 million proposition, if you are going to do anything in this business. They're still short by \$400 million."

"The only thing that's 64-Bit about the Jaguar is it happens to have a 64-Bit memory bus. We have more memory band-width than they have. We don't happen to have an arbitrary 64-Bit memory product bus. We actually have dual 32-Bit memory buses and we also have several other channels because we have a DMA structure where there are a lot of parallel roads working simultaneously."

"Their CPU (Central Processing Unit) is 16-Bit. Ours is 32-Bit, and our co-processors are a lot more powerful doing the graphics and sound. Atari has trouble getting good sound during game play because of how they set up their bus structure. It's only because of an ambiguity in the law that they can even say 64-Bit without having to explain what they mean."

"When you try to compare systems, you can't just boil it down to 'this system is 32-Bit and this one is not.' You have to look at the machines more specifically and ask, 'What does the entire architecture consist of?'"

"When we designed the 3DO, we were concentrating on the real problems: how do you draw more pixels on the screen with more color? How do you simultaneously do high-quality stereo sound and have the machine be responsive enough?"

The Sega 32X and Saturn

"Sega is sending a very confusing message to the customer saying, 'Buy Genesis, now it's Game Gear, no, actually it's Sega CD, no it's 32X, forget all of that stuff, it's Saturn, maybe it's Titan, how about Pico.'"

"The release of the Saturn in the U.S. and Europe is kind of a question mark because they have been waffling as to whether or not they're going to actually release it outside of Japan. They've gotten a tremendous amount of negative feedback about the design.

"Saturn has segmented memory architecture which is very hard to program for. It also has quite a few third-party components that make it more expensive. By having two processors, they're kind of admitting that they've got the wrong processor family (the Hitachi SH-2). It's not powerful enough, it's going to be too expensive, and there's no scalability. To achieve high integration at a low cost, you need a simple abstract architecture model."

32X

"When you have an installed base as large as Sega has with the Genesis, and you come out with anything that costs less than \$200, some people are going to buy it. That makes the release of the 32X a very nice financial event for Sega as a company.

"Everyone knows that 32X is a Band-Aid. It's not a 'next-generation system.' It's fairly expensive. It's not particularly high-performance. It's hard to program for, and it's not compatible with the Saturn.

"From our point of view, we're looking at the future saying, 'There are customers who want to buy a true next-generation system.' The 32X is not a competitor because anyone who buys one is going to buy a 3DO, a Sony PlayStation, a Saturn or an Ultra 64 within the next two years."

The Nintendo Ultra 64

"I realize that Nintendo keeps saying [that the Ultra 64 will be released in] 1995, but there is absolutely no evidence to support that. What they did in Chicago [at the 1994 Summer Consumer Electronics Show] was show people the coin-op hardware, which has absolutely no connection with the Ultra 64 from an internal standpoint.

"Around that same time they had just picked up the RAM-Bus memory architecture for the Ultra 64."

Hawkins dismissed a statement from Peter Main, Nintendo vice president of marketing, in which Main suggested that Nintendo would introduce the Ultra 64 by mid-1995. "No way, José. It's a big promotional head fake.

"If he told you six months, mark your calendar and call him on that date. He'll tell you, 'No, six months from now,' and he'll still be

blowing smoke at that point.

Trip went on to explain the reasons for his doubt that the project would be delayed from the time schedule established by Nintendo.

"We hire a lot of people from SGI [Silicon Graphics, Inc.—the company working with Nintendo to create the Ultra 64 Entertainment System]. We know a lot about the status of the project. Most people don't think it's even going to happen next year.

Trip continues, "If Nintendo really knew what they were doing, they wouldn't have to bet the farm on another company's engineering. For them, having always made their own hardware and run their own business, to suddenly say, 'We're out of our depth, let's go to SGI' is like an automaker in Detroit going to Boeing and saying, 'You have a great record for efficiency in the cost of passenger miles for your jets, why don't you build us a sub-compact car.'"

"Silicon Graphics doesn't know any more about how to build a low-cost consumer device than Boeing knows about making sub-compact cars. And I don't mean any disrespect to SGI or Boeing.

"It's interesting that Nintendo was so desperate that they would have to go to a third party like that and be so dependent upon them, particularly when that third party won't suffer if the mission fails."

A Killer Application



The first time I met Trip Hawkins was at the 1994 Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. At that time everyone, including *The Wall Street Journal*, was predicting the rapid demise of the 3DO game platform. Although they had few complaints about the hardware, they still had plenty to say about the new system. The most common observation was that Hawkins needed to find a "killer application" that could serve as a reason for buying the 3DO.

We met on the third day of the show, and most of the reporters that Hawkins had met had all repeated that same story—"you need a killer app." At the end of the day, I ran into Hawkins. He politely asked what I thought of the 3DO.

"It's a good machine, but you need a killer application." I thought I was being completely original.

Hawkins immediately excused himself and walked away. (Steven L. Kent)



The Industry Replies...



Trip on the future of video gaming

"Sega is sort of an interactive Disney. They're great at telling a story and their coin-operated hardware is really an event. In the long run, the 32VR [an upcoming home virtual reality product] is going to be Nintendo's best business. It maintains the flavor of the toy business.

"Nintendo and Sega have no understanding of hardware. Traditionally, video game companies abandon current systems for newer ones every three years. Nintendo created a huge 8-Bit market and then sat back and did nothing to keep their customers. Then Sega came along and said, 'Thanks for warming the market,' and they took a lot of the market away. Now Sega is doing the same thing.

"The cost of the next-generation systems makes them an investment. It's no longer just a throw-away toy.

"I'm actually looking forward to Sony and Saturn finally showing up on the Japanese market. It's like waiting for the other shoe to drop. I'd rather have them out there to have people realize what they are, including the warts. Right now everyone is assuming that they're going to be great because they're still just an idea and not reality."

Sega's Response:

R

Richard Brudvik-Lindner, Sega director of communications, responded to Trip Hawkins' analysis of the Saturn and 32X as follows:

Hawkins: "Saturn has segmented memory architecture which is very hard to program for. It also has quite a few third-party components that make it more expensive."

Lindner: "Our segmented architecture is built around multiple RISC chips that work in concert to provide fast information processing. Hawkins is using the FUD factor to mislead people who are unfamiliar with parallel and distributed processing."

Hawkins: "The release of the Saturn in the U.S. and Europe is kind of a question mark."

Lindner: "The Saturn is absolutely coming out in the U.S. next year. There is no question about it."

Hawkins: "Everyone knows that 32X is a Band-Aid."

Lindner: "If you consider a system that has 75 titles in the its first year, performs at 40 times the speed of the Sega Genesis and produces up to 32,000 colors a Band-Aid, then the 32X is a Band-Aid."

Lindner went on to explain Sega's reasons for feeling that the 32X is a valid choice, pointing to software availability: "We've already signed on 27 licensees, and we're releasing the 32X with three drive titles—**Star Wars Arcade**, **Virtua Racing** and **Doom**. The 32X was designed to replicate the arcade experience."

Hawkins: "32X is not compatible with the Saturn."

Lindner: "Both systems have the same architecture. You read between the lines."

"Sega has never abandoned its customer base. When we released the Genesis, we created an adapter that allowed them to play Master System cartridges. The 32X lets you run titles from your Genesis library."

Atari's Response:

B

Bill Rehbock, Atari VP of software business development, responded to Trip Hawkins' analysis of his company as follows:

Hawkins: "Even with the additional \$90 million, they don't have enough money."

Rehbock: "We're not increasing the royalties that we charge our developers. Atari's sell-through in the United States is 100,000—equal or very close to 3DO's U.S. sales."

Hawkins: "The only thing that's 64-Bit about the Jaguar is that it happens to have a 64-Bit memory bus."

Rehbock: "The Jaguar System is 64-Bit. Trip can stop by anytime; I'll be happy to point out the traces on our motherboard."

Hawkins: "Atari has trouble getting good sound during game play because of how they set up their bus structure."

Rehbock: "Our Digital Signal Processor has 8K zero wait-state static RAM. In fact, it has shown great sound performance. **Tempest 2000** has a rocking soundtrack throughout. Trip doesn't have enough knowledge to make a statement like that about our system."

Hawkins: "We have more memory bandwidth than they have. We have dual 32-Bit memory buses and several other channels because we have a DMA structure with a lot of parallel roads working simultaneously."

Rehbock: "The heart of the Jaguar has the GPU (Graphics Processing Unit), which includes a 27 MIPS RISK 4K bytes zero wait-state static RAM. The system also has a Blitter which copies chunks of memory from one place in a map to another more efficiently than other systems. Blitters were used in the Atari ST and the Commodore Amiga computers. The cell engines in a 3DO are not capable of matching the Blitter's performance."

Rehbock (Parting words): "Trip spent a year promising the world a holodeck [a recreational room in **Star Trek: The Next Generation** in which computers create three-dimensional, interactive worlds]."

Nintendo's Response:

A

Author's note: Nintendo spokespeople traditionally take the high road rather than exchange accusations with competitors. Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo manager of corporate communications, gave a measured response to Trip Hawkins' accusations that the Ultra 64 would not be released in 1995.

Hawkins: "It's interesting that Nintendo was so desperate that they would have to go to a third party like that and be so dependent upon them."

Kaplan: "SGI creates the best graphics equipment in the world. We know more about marketing video games than anybody in the world. It's a perfect marriage."

Hawkins: "We know a lot about the status of the project (Ultra 64). Most people don't think it's even going to happen next year."

Kaplan: "We will dedicate all of our attention to unveiling the Ultra 64 at the E-3 Consumer Show this summer. That's really all that needs to be said on the subject."

Kaplan (Parting words): "The bottom line is that the consumers get to decide which system is the best. They'll get the chance to compare the systems for themselves next summer."

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FROM
THE
HOT
LIPS
OF
WORLD
OF
D



TEST

By Bill Kunkel

**THE UNION OF
HOLLYWOOD
AND
ELECTRONIC
GAMING—THE
COMMITMENT
GROWS**



So, played any good movies lately? That probably sounds strange to the ear, but get used to it. The current infusion of Hollywood money and talent into gaming has made interactive movies one of the most popular genres in electronic gaming. Meanwhile, back in Lotusland, computer technology is busy revolutionizing the entire movie business.

The Hollywood Invasion

The Hollywood Silicon Rush has been going strong now for well over a year, with the major players like Take 2, Paramount, Viacom and Rocket Science now making a big splash in the interactive gaming pool. Major new cinematic releases such as **Under a Killing Moon** (Access Software), **Wing Commander III** (Origin), **Star Crusader** (Take 2) and **seaQuest DSV** (T*HQ) are now arriving as regularly as the latest direct-to-video horror film.

Within the past six months such stars as Brian Keith, Margot Kidder, Mark Hamill, John Rhys-Davies, Malcolm McDowell and Tim Curry have appeared in interactive CD-ROM games, while in the other direction, computer technology has all but reinvented the methodology through which films are created.

Motion pictures and electronic games have grown to have more and more in common—especially in terms of the technology used to create both media—but they are vastly different in terms of output. Movies are linear, with the story completely under the control of the director. Viewers can't stop a character from entering a house full of monsters, and that helplessness becomes part of the dynamic of the moviegoing experience.

Games, on the other hand, are interactive experiences. Heavy plot lines tend to bog games down, muffling and limiting the interactive component. An interactive auteur can never be certain what the player is going to do once they've entered his environment. All he can do is limit the options; and the more limitation, the less interactivity. Since it is their interactive nature that makes games unique, it was inevitable that many of the early interactive movies would turn out much more like movies than games.

Optimists, however, already see an upward spiral developing in the learning curve. "We added more interactivity in **Wing 3** than we had in the previous two games put together," boasted WC guru Chris Roberts in a recent interview with **EG**. "It's an interactive story, so the player needs to feel as if they're in control of the story, and you don't want them doing anything they don't have control over."

There are still some kinks as the differences between the two art forms are ironed out, but the progress is obvious.

Digital Hollywood

Obviously, it's the overlap between the two art forms that has drawn them together. Films like *Terminator 2*, *The Abyss*, *The Mask* and *Jurassic Park* have paved the way for a new, digital Hollywood. Yet even modest, non-sfx oriented films such as *Radioland Murders* make extensive use of the new technology to produce optical effects that 99 percent of the viewing audience will never even know were there.

Computers, especially the graphic powerhouse Silicon Graphics systems and special software from companies like Wavefront and Alias, once used to produce eyeball-bending morphing effects and animate dinosaurs, now are being used to more prosaic ends. For example, back in the '60s, during the era of the big-budget spectacles (*Ben Hur*,

Spartacus, *El Cid*, etc.), thousands of extras were recruited for the big crowd scenes. Today, however, extras can be digitally reproduced from stock footage. Or a set of 100 characters can be rubber stamped, then randomly duplicated and positioned, to create a crowd of 100,000.

Optical effects are being used extensively, for example, in Martin Scorsese's new film, *Casino*, which is set in the Las Vegas of several decades ago. The Strip has changed a lot in the past three decades. Hotels such as the Dunes and the old Flamingo are long gone, while mammoth new constructions like the Mirage, Excalibur and Luxor have been erected in their place. No problem, given today's digital technology. The new buildings can be easily removed from any shot, while the casinos of yore can be scanned from old photos and placed wherever the director directs.

Let's Make a Deal

It was inevitable that the dealmakers from the movie business and the movers and shakers of the interactive world would get together, especially as both the cost and potential profits for high-end electronic games sail gayly through the roof. For years, visionaries saw the possibilities inherent in shooting game footage while a movie was in production. With products such as Williams' coin-op version of *T2: Judgment Day*, that is exactly what happened. Similarly, when Virgin inked a deal to produce the 3DO version of *Demolition Man*, stars Sly Stallone and Wesley Snipes came along with the contract—as did the production plans for all



Mark Hamill as Col. Christopher Blair in Origin's Wing Commander III.

of the film's exotic sets. This allowed Virgin to rebuild these sets on a virtual plane, while the actors performed their scenes in front of green screens and were later blended into the cybersets.

Similarly, the cost of creating today's technologically sophisticated games has risen to near-movie levels. **Wing Commander III**, from Origin, is Chris Roberts' most ambitious sci-fi game yet, and features not only major stars, but state-of-the-art special effects, including full-size, animatronic Kilrathi, the cat-like alien race who serve as the game's villains. How does Chris plan to top this? "Next time around I'm definitely going to shoot a movie and ... computer game at the same time," Chris told **EG**. "A proper theatrical release. To get the production level and quality I want on my next game, it will have to be Hollywood budget level."

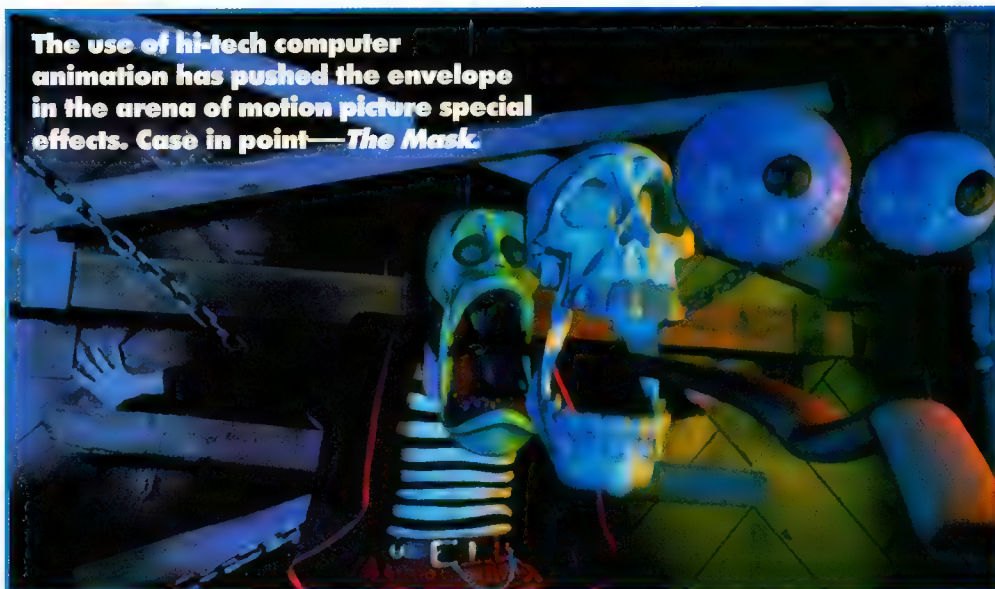
That means Hollywood-level financing. It means dealing with the same labor unions and craft guilds as Hollywood. After all, actors, directors, cameramen, prop people, set designers and other artists will be required to produce these epic productions.

It also means Hollywood-level profits, something we've already seen develop; in its first week in national release, after all, Acclaim's **Mortal Kombat II** did a staggering \$50 million in business. How does that figure track when compared to the release of a major motion picture? Well, for example, it's more money than *The Lion King*, *Forrest Gump* or *True Lies* made in their first week of release, if that provides a clue.

We're talking big money and even bigger technology. The dream merchants of the cinematic world and the dreamers from cyberspace have come together to fashion a new entertainment medium. Their ambition is boundless, and the toys at their disposal are capable of generating anything they can imagine.

So, whether the product is a state-of-the-art blockbuster like **Wing Commander III**, or the more humble antics of the **Animaniacs**, gaming stands on the edge of a great revolution.

Where that revolution will take us is anybody's guess.

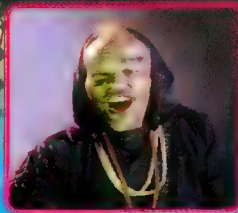


The use of hi-tech computer animation has pushed the envelope in the arena of motion picture special effects. Case in point—The Mask.

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LIVE MOTION PICTURE **ACTION**

T

HE STARS OF WING COMMANDER III

By Russ Ceccola

Many multimedia games start from scratch and introduce players to brand-new characters. **Wing Commander III: The Heart of the Tiger (WCIII)** takes a different approach. All of the most familiar characters from the **Wing Commander** saga have been portrayed by popular actors and actresses. The leads for **WCIII** are an impressive assembly of talent. Mark Hamill plays Col. Christopher Blair, the main character who the player controls. Malcolm McDowell is a perfect match for Admiral Tolwyn. John Rhys-Davies takes the buddy role as Paladin, Blair's old friend. Ginger Lynn Allen's Rachel fixes and preps ships. Jennifer MacDonald's Flint keeps Blair occupied as his newest love interest. Thomas F. Wilson makes a perfect Maniac, the hotshot of the **Wing Commander** series. Recently, Hamill, Allen and Rhys-Davies spoke to **EG** about their roles and unique experiences.

Game designer and **Wing Commander** series creator Chris Roberts explained the rationale for the group of stars. "We had a lot more money at our disposal because **Wing Commander** was an established product," he said. "I wanted to take **Wing Commander** to the next level. I wanted to bring some legitimacy to this emerging industry with real actors and actresses."

The technique works well with **WCIII**. People who have played previous **Wing Commander** games will love to see the series "regulars" brought to life, even including the



The drawing power of sci-fi stars like Mark Hamill and Malcolm McDowell offer a valuable new element to the interactive gaming industry.



Kilrathi warriors who are realized in fully mobile costumes with animatronic facial and head movements. The plan is to turn the next story in the series into both a game and a motion picture simultaneously in 1996. "As a consequence of doing the movie, you get the game too," Roberts exclaimed.

Hamill's Blair is a completely new type of role for him, even after his voice-over work for Sierra On-line's Gabriel Knight. "Gabriel Knight was an easier crash course because I was able to read off the script," he explained. "With **WCIII**, I had to act, too. I wasn't sure if I was up to the whole thing. As it turned out, I had nothing to fear." Hamill was drawn into the project by its new format. "It sounded like a lot of fun and intrigued me from a technical standpoint. I wanted to be in on it. If somebody's got a new toy, I want to see it—I want to play with it," he acknowledged.

Although Hamill has three children who are particularly adept with new technology, he doesn't have much experience with computer or video games himself. He's quickly catching up. The only *Star Wars*-themed game he ever won was a "Pong version of *Star Wars*" that was a simple reaction contest to destroy the Death Star. He really doesn't have time to play games now. **WCIII** is his way of jumping feet first into a new genre and giving it a chance. "After 20 years in the business, it's time for me to step up to the plate," he said. His next projects include a John Carpenter remake of *Village of the Damned* and a possible game design from an original story he wrote.

Allen described her character Rachel as "fun and feisty with spunk and attitude." This is a prominent role for the actress who only bought her first computer in 1993 and planned a 1994 Christmas gift to herself of a CD-ROM drive. Allen was "amazed at the size of the script" and

found the game "interesting because every scene has many options depending on how the player acts."

After turning down roles in other games as the head of the CIA and a female detective, Allen latched onto **WCIII** through an open audition. She liked her job despite the large number of takes all the talent had to withstand because there were "so many wonderfully funny people to work with." The experience was "unbelievable and far more detailed than I ever imagined," she revealed.

Rhys-Davies makes a wonderful sidekick to Hamill much as he did for Harrison Ford in the first and third *Indiana Jones* films. He acknowledged that "our generation owes a great deal to science fiction. It turned a lot of young people onto science."

Rhys-Davies is a confessed computer enthusiast. He bought the \$99 Timex Sinclair computer kit way back when and the earliest 128K Macintosh, but he admits that he can't type. "The keyboard was clearly designed for people who have nothing better to do," he joked. He looks forward to better voice-recognition and writing-recognition tools instead.

He recalled one incident during the filming of **WCIII** in which Hamill was supposed to take a jab at him, but because of his care in not touching the computer-generated scenery that would be added around him, he lost his balance and fell on the floor. Still, Rhys-Davies commented that the lack of sets was not a hindrance. "We didn't have anything to distract us, so we had to listen to each other—that's when actors are their best. We all had a good time and I'd personally like to be able to do it again."

WCIII is the way all multimedia games should be—with a great game behind the cinematics and a talented cast that brings emotion and energy to their characters.

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A

NIMANIACS IN GAMELAND

by John Wesley Hardin

**TWO NEW GAMES
FEATURE THREE CARTOON FAVORITES**

The music. It's in your head. It won't stop. In your head. The music. Over and over, without pause. "We're Animaniacs, ..." The Warner brothers, Yakko and Wakko, and the Warner sister, Dot, are the hippest things to come from Warner Bros. since Bugs Bunny.

Created in the 1930s by a crazed cartoonist, they were considered too extreme, too wild, just too *zany*. WB execs locked them in a tower on the studio lot, where they remained for 60 years. Now they're loose. They're smarter than the *Tiny Toons*, and a lot of their sly humor is aimed directly at adults. Because of this, the *Animaniacs* TV show has built a growing cult among older cartoon fans. Now, Konami is ready to capitalize on the crossover appeal of the Animaniacs with two very different 16-Bit video games. These contests obviously spring from a common source. Both are action games with a puzzle element, but there are big differences in how the play is implemented.

On the SNES, the story is driven by Pinky and the Brain. The rodents are out doing the same thing they do every night: trying to take over the world. In a typical hairbrained scheme, The Brain has stolen a great movie script from Warner Bros. With script in hand, he'll make the best movie ever, and earn enough money for Pinky and The Brain to take over the world. The CEO of Warner Bros. calls the Animaniacs for help. (Hey, it could happen.) The animated trio must comb the Warner Bros. lot for the missing script, while avoiding Ralph, the Warners security guard.

The lot is comprised of a number of sets, each with a different movie being filmed on it: one set is adventure themed, one has a sci-fi movie in production, etc. The player guides W, Y and D on a side-scrolling trip through the different sets.

On the Genesis, Wakko, Yakko and Dot still run wild over the Warner lot, but here, their goal is to collect various items used in classic movies, to collect enough memorabilia to open their own "hip, pop culture" shop. (Okay, this sounds even more unlikely, but what do we know?) The adventure here



is presented, again, as a series of movie sets.

In the Warner Bros. lot screen, players decide which of the sets they will go into. On the SNES, they are pursued by Ralph in this screen, and can be caught. If this happens, the player must go to a special rescue screen. On the Genesis, Ralph chases them, but he can't really catch them.

In both games, the Animaniacs always travel as a group. The player controls the leader as the other two tag along and switches between the characters depending on the obstacle to be overcome. The Genesis cart gives each Animaniac a special power that they can use to work through the puzzles. Yakko has a ball and paddle which he uses to great effect. He can also push and pull heavy things. Wakko

has a sledgehammer which he uses to smash obstacles and the occasional bad guy. Dot blows kisses which charm some of the characters that the trio encounter. In the SNES game, they don't have any special tools, but they do have acrobatic tricks to get over walls and such.

The SNES *Animaniacs* also have a slot machine. As they travel through the game, Yakko, Wakko and Dot collect coins. Every five coins activate the slot machine at the bottom of the screen. It spins and different Animaniacs characters pop up in the three windows. Three nurses ("Hellooo Nurse!") give the player limited invincibility, three CEOs give one continue, and three Ralphs take all the players' coins. With many varied combinations, the slot machine introduces a random element that really evokes the feeling of the cartoon, where anything could happen. There's almost as much humor here as on TV. In one cut scene, Yakko tells Dot, "The next time you speak to me, shut up." Not too many games have a line that one wants to quote to friends.

Only in the past few years have we seen video games with enough sophistication to do justice to animated licenses. Today, interactive cartoons are the norm and graphics are only getting better. As Hollywood and interactive electronic gaming climb into bed together, it's good to see characters like Yakko, Wakko and Dot in bed with them.





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T

AKE 2 INTERACTIVE:

USING VOICE ACTING TO MAKE A PRODUCT IMPRESSION

by John Wesley Hardin

In software development, some jobs are just taken for granted; working with the programmers to get concepts down, doing game proposal documents, fighting intense deadlines, having to balance the creative concept with doable technology and pounding on the door of Grace Jones' New York apartment at midnight.

Well, maybe not *all* software developers are dealing with the notorious Ms. Jones in the wee hours of the morning, but if you happen to be John Antinori and Laura Kampo, with Take 2 Interactive Software, midnight meetings with stars can be all in a day's work.

Antinori and Kampo found themselves in this situation recently when delivering a script for the game **Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller** to Jones so that she could prepare for her role in the game.

"Hollywood and software development tend to work on a slightly different schedule," quipped Antinori.

Take 2 has been working with a lot of big names lately—Dennis Hopper and stunning supermodel Stephanie Seymour, just to name a couple. Expect to see more in the future. A good question for **EG** readers to



ask is, "Why is this spunky startup suddenly sucking some big name actors into your CD-ROM drive?"

The answer, as with most things in the software industry, is sharply rooted in money.

To properly answer our question, we should rephrase it. If you are a new startup with plenty of programming talent and more than a little cash muscle, how do you make

sure that your titles, particularly those first, critical titles, get noticed by the buying public assaulted by a plethora of new games all competing for the gaming dollar? With hundreds of new games on the shelf in any given year, all claiming to be the greatest thing since someone thought blowing up asteroids might be a fun thing to do with their university mainframe, competition is fierce.

Hence, the critical need to catch the public attention. The need is imperative. As any longtime watcher of this industry knows, two failures in a row can really cripple a house, and if you are startup, it isn't just failures that can cripple you. Even mid-list products aren't much of a blessing. You need to come out of the gate screaming, or you might not get the chance to saddle up again.

Hence, Take 2 is betting high production values, a solid production team and star power will prove the ticket to success for them.

"Right now, full video didn't seem the way to go. We are looking into a number of possible technologies for going that direction in the future, but we felt that for right now using voice acting along with our 3-D art renderings would produce a consistent, good playing game, and get us noticed," said F.J. Lennon, Take 2's vice president of product development.

All the big attention in the industry right now is focused on using full-motion video footage of actors, such as the work being done on **Wing Commander III** or **Under a Killing Moon**. There is some full-motion video in **Hell**, but very little. Lennon believes that voice acting, with the current state of the art, is strongly underrated.





“We aren’t going to be able to get Dennis Hopper to come in here while we try to make him up in some hokey makeup. On the other hand, when a voice script takes him half a day to do, and we have the art talent that we do to produce the renderings, then we have something much less intrusive on the actor.”

“The question is if you can integrate the video seamlessly with the game experience? It should never detract. The acting and the work should be seamless. With voice acting we can do that,” Lennon continued.

Another important motivator is money. The costs of shooting a full script with professional filmmakers and actors is prohibitively high for all but the most gargantuan software budgets. However, big-name actors are much easier to work with on audio-only projects.

“Even if we had settled on using full video solutions in *Hell*, we just don’t have the capacity at this stage of our development. We aren’t going to be able to get Dennis Hopper to come in here while we try to make him up in some hokey makeup. On the other hand, when a voice script takes him half a day to do, and we have the art talent that we do to produce the renderings,

then we have something much less intrusive on the actor,” said Lennon.

John Antinori agrees.

“Actors really enjoy doing voice acting. It is a challenge for them, and for some of the younger actors it is something that they have never tried before. The feedback we have gotten from our actors is incredibly good. Dennis Hopper has talked well of the experience in interviews and Geoffery Holder invited us up to his apartment for dinner and discussed how he enjoyed working on the project,” Antinori said.

However, when you are a software concern, jumping into the world of Hollywood to get more out of your product can present a very daunting front. Aren’t there unions? How do you run all the sound equipment properly? Not to mention the simple act of getting the actors to agree to work in the

comparatively new world of multimedia gaming.

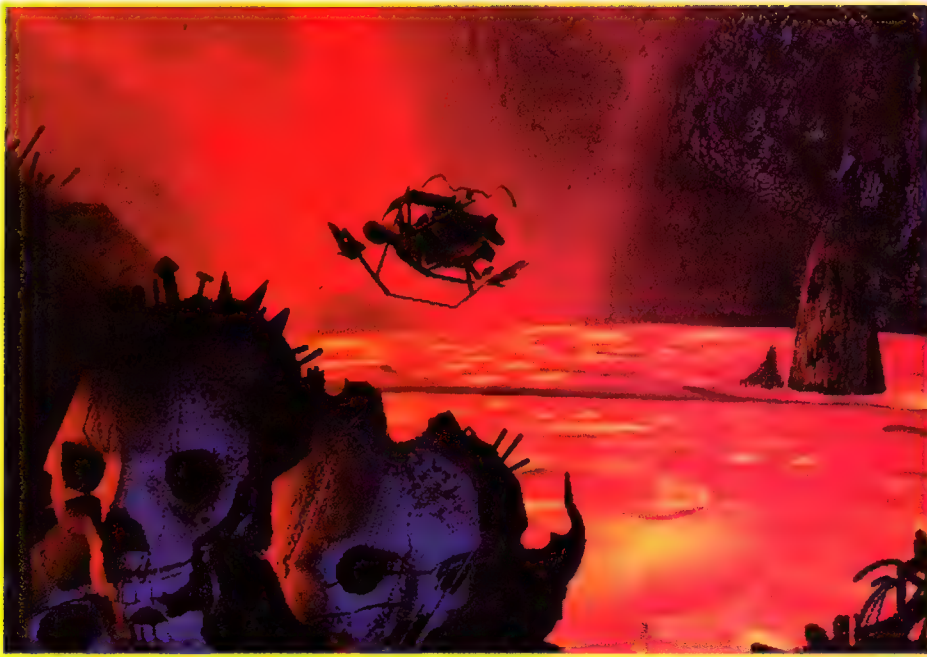
As for the unions, Take 2 found that working with the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA) wasn’t half as bad as they feared it might be, and that the union even proved helpful.

“We sent out a casting call first and then called in the union. They have really gone out of their way to work with us. All of the union actors are really professional. AFTRA helps us in casting and has generally turned out to be very good to work with,” said Antinori.

As for doing sound, Take 2 does most of their work in-house, although with the bigger names they hire sound engineers where the actors are located. Working on *Hell*, Antinori flew to New York and Hawaii to get sound from Hopper, Jones and Holder.

“Geoffery Holder freaked when he saw the size of script we sent him. He called us up and said, ‘There is no way to do this in one day.’”





The remainder of the work was done in Take 2's makeshift studio in Latrobe, PA.

To make this possible—after all these are programmers and designers, not sound engineers—Take 2 called in an outside sound firm, SoundPlanet, to set up the equipment for the taping.

"These guys are great. They made it monkey simple. You press the button and take down the tape counter number for the take," Antinori said.

"Yeah, they have labels on the system that say things like, 'Don't even touch this switch.' Then when we get the tape, we just send it to them for cleanup. They have set it up really well," Lennon added.

For those on the outside looking in,

casting would seem to be a real problem. The media is new, and who knows how to hire an actor anyway?

"It is mainly a matter of being persistent. You call their agent and follow up," Ryan Brant, CEO of Take 2, said in dismissing the difficulty of hiring big-name actors.

"Sure it is sometimes difficult for Hollywood to understand the financial and technical limitations of Silicon Valley—I mean, there are big differences between the two—but with persistence and explanation these people can be hired," he continued.

However, the transition from pure programming to adding the human element hasn't been perfect. Take 2 found that writing for a standard game and writing

scripts for live actors is a different beast.

"Geoffery Holder freaked when he saw the size of script we sent him. He called us up and said, 'There is no way to do this in one day,'" Antinori recalled.

A number of the key staff members for Take 2 have long pedigrees in the software industry, being survivors of Paragon Software, and Lennon feels his experience in working with roughly a score of games in the last eight years is something of a hindrance when writing voice scripts.

"Things that look great when you are dealing with a text-based game just don't work when someone says them. Now we have to constantly cut our scripts to the bone. I now read everything out loud and think to myself, 'Can someone actually say this and sound real.' It is a different way of writing than I am used to," Lennon said.

Antinori agreed.

"When you are working with the scripts, it is much harder. Editing everything down is the key. We have had the hardest time with cutting. But now that this project is done, we have learned that. The next time out there aren't going to be any of the late-night cutting sessions like there were for **Hell**," he laughed.

Working with actors might be a shock for some software designers, not to mention how strange it must be for the actors, but as Hollywood and Silicon Valley draw closer together, both sides will have to learn to make allowances. In the case of **Hell**, Take 2 innovatively got the star power they needed to punch their game through to the masses, and the actors got a chance to practice the almost dead art of voice acting. A good deal for all, that will hopefully provide a good game for the buying public. (*John P. Withers*)

"The question is if you can integrate the video seamlessly with the game experience? It should never detract. The acting and the work should be seamless. With voice acting we can do that."



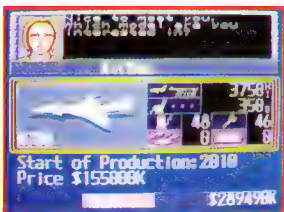
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SEAQUEST DSV: GOING FOR THE DEPTHS

by Ross Chamberlain

T*HQ'S GAME BASED ON THE TV SERIES GETS THE HI-TECH TREATMENT

Steven Spielberg's ventures into television have met varied degrees of success, ranging from *The Family Dog*, which never really got out of the doghouse, to the ambitious *Young Indiana Jones* series. *seaQuest DSV* seems to have fallen into the latter category, with NBC placing it at the once prestigious and still contested 8 o'clock Sunday evening spot opposite some strong, if varied, contenders.

To turn the futuristic underwater adventure show into a video game seems like a natural enough progression. It's not clear who brought up the original idea, but license owner MCA/Universal lauds the work of its publishing division President Nancy Cushing-Jones in bringing it together with T*HQ, and Jeff Peters, the project manager at Sculptured Software, the developer, extols the cooperation he received from Amblin Entertainment.

All parties involved were resolved to try to bring a sense of the world behind the *seaQuest* series to **seaQuest DSV**, including the advanced graphics that characterize the series.

"The quality of game play is crucial," said Cushing-Jones. "A game needs to stand on its own as a game, whether or not it is tied in with another property. I'm very familiar with Sculptured Software, and we all worked together to reflect the nature of the material, in this case, *seaQuest DSV*."

"We worked with Amblin on both the development of the show and the game," Peters said. "We got everything we could—the score, sets, place shots; we used their 3-D models—everything is modeled. The game's beautiful.

"We heard about **Donkey Kong Country**, what they were doing with Silicon Graphics. We looked at each other and said, 'We're doing that!'"

"We made a conscious decision not to use any of the actual actors or their likenesses," Peters acknowledged, citing the games based on such licenses as *Star Trek* and the *Star Wars* series in which particular personalities took the spotlight. "We avoided the human element, in order to put the player at center stage in the *seaQuest* world."

At first, the impression is a little like the academy-type games that run under both those space-based licenses as well as Origin's **Wing Commander** series. "Players must prove their ability to join the UEO flagship crew and eventually to assume command of the *seaQuest*." This is done through a series of missions of



varying complexity, many involving some of the subsidiary vehicles, probes and even Darwin, the dolphin, that can be deployed from the *seaQuest*. The vehicles are the Stinger, a one-man attack sub; Sea Speeders, two-man attack subs; Sea Crab, a six-legged ship used to mine ore samples and the Sea Truck, a personnel transport and cargo carrier. Interactive ship locations include the bridge, navigation, docking bay and transportation, plus there are screens for access to information about the world situation at large.

The player begins at a rank of seaman second class and with the successful completion of each mission rises through most of the standard navy ranks, including commodore, with the final goal being to reach Admiral.

Missions involve a variety of assignments from peace-keeping to rescue efforts to salvage to treasure-hunting. "We started out with plans for 40 or 50 missions," Peters noted. "We ended up with 23 or 24."

There are opportunities for discovery as well as the completion of assignments. As the game continues, however, it becomes clear that there is a major enemy out there, the leader of a worldwide pirate organization. It is part and parcel of the need to rise through the ranks in order to develop the power and expertise to successfully meet and overcome that threat.

The Genesis demo tells about this background plot right up front; the SNES version

lets the player discover it as the game progresses. Sculptured did the design for both the Genesis and SNES versions of **seaQuest DSV**; Unexpected Development took on the job of creating a version for the Game Boy.

"The Genesis and SNES versions are not identical," Peters noted, explaining that the design for each was weighted for each system's strengths and weaknesses. "Both are 16-Megabit carts. The overview and modes of play are the same, the core is the same, but there are differences in the missions, in controls, even in the introductions and demos. A player on one will not necessarily know everything to do in the other." The SNES version was released in December under the Black Pearl label while the Genesis edition, which lists Malibu Games on its opening screen, is scheduled for January or February. The Game Boy edition appeared in November.

Other *seaQuest* licensees include Revell-Monogram's model kits, and Playmates, which has several action figures (including Darwin) and vehicles (the Stinger and an EVA launch with room for four figures). In the works is a model of the *seaQuest* itself which will light up and make noises.

The game does more than that. It looks better than most cartridge games have ever looked, and the play is a little different too. **seaQuest DSV** went for depth in more ways than one.

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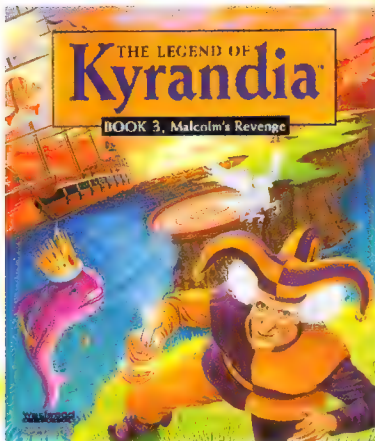


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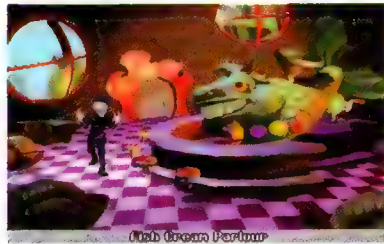
FEATURES

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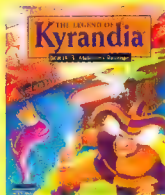
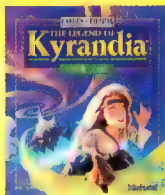
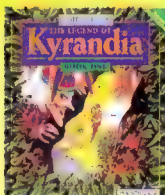
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BATTLING FOR ALL THE



BANNERS

Rare Limited Breathes New Life into 16-Bit Technology

by Steve Kent

Remember those infomercials in the late '80s where real estate developers touted their wealth by showing off big homes and huge fleets of expensive cars? Those fleets look like a rent-a-wreck car lot compared to the fine collection of cars outside Rare Limited. At Rare, the BMWs and Mercedes Benz' are the working-class cars. It's the Lotuses and Mazarattis that sit around. The cars belong to two brothers, Tim and Chris Stamper, who have no interest in real-estate development.

Situated in the small village of Twycross, England, Rare Limited is one of the biggest producers of Nintendo games in the world. Even if you haven't heard of the company, you may have played their games. Going into the 16-Bit generation of video games, Rare's products were actually quite common. Working for companies like Acclaim, Milton Bradley and even Nintendo, the prolific staff of Rare created such hits as **Marble Madness**, **R.C. ProAm** and **Battletoads**. In all, the company produced nearly 60 games for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES).

With the introduction of the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), Rare Limited virtually disappeared, only releasing two games—**Battletoads: Battle Maniacs** and **Battletoads and Double Dragon**. Great products, but after making as many as 10 games a year, two games in three years is scarce, even for a company with a name like Rare.

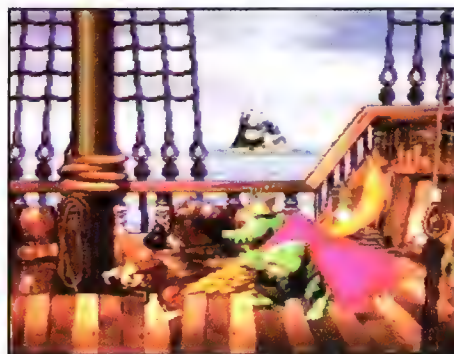
Rare Creativity—Tim Stamper

Though a team of talented programmers and developers work at Rare Limited, three players had major roles in the company's success. The most famous is Tim Stamper, a

game designer who is well on his way to becoming one of the most sought-after storytellers in the electronic gaming industry. According to Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo of America, Stamper is one of an elite group of game producers who can achieve the perfect level of humor, challenge and plot. "There are only two or three people in the world with that kind of talent," says Lincoln.

Working with his brother Chris, Stamper first became involved with video games in 1979 making conversions for old **Space Invaders** boards. During the first home-system revolution, 1983 and 1984, they focused their attention on what Chris refers to as United Kingdom-based systems such as the Sinclair Spectrum and the Commodore 64.

Though their Commodore titles included minor successes such as **The Staff of Karnath**, they're most proud of the work they did on the Sinclair. "That was a very significant platform in the U.K.," says Chris Stamper. "The first game we wrote was called **Jet Pac**. For an installed base of 1 million Spectrums, we sold just over 300,000 units.





It was incredible penetration for just a single product.

"We had an advantage. We had been working on arcade boards, so we just took that expertise and transferred it directly to the Spectrum. No one had seen that type of quality on the Spectrum."

Tim Stamper still speaks fondly of his work with the Sinclair Spectrum. The platform was so popular in England that Tim became a minor celebrity, known by Spectrum gamers everywhere. A decade later, Tim's Sinclair games still have a following. He is often cornered by fans at trade shows.

Rare Invention—Chris Stamper

In the mid-1980s, as Nintendo started a new wave of excitement for home video games, the Stampers approached Minoru Arakawa, president of Nintendo of America, and said that they would like to program games for the NES. "Originally we went to them and asked for the technical specs," says Chris Stamper. "We couldn't get those, so I

reverse engineered the NES. I understood coin-op hardware, so I had a good idea of what the Nintendo actually contained."

"We produced a demo. When Mr. Arakawa saw the demo, he said, 'Okay, you have our blessings' and gave us the full specifications."

"I think Chris got it about 99 percent correct," adds Tim Stamper. "There were just a few things we didn't know about. But the interesting thing was that there were things about the machine that Chris discovered that weren't documented. That instantly gave us an advantage which other developers didn't have."

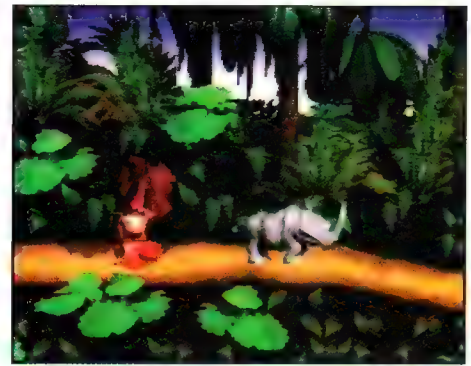
Reinventing the NES, Chris Stamper had discovered ways of handling the scrolling that had never been done before. He also found new ways of handling sprites (characters). One of their first games, **R.C. ProAm**, was the first Nintendo cartridge to feature a split-screen.

Nintendo executives were not only impressed with the game, they were excited by the new abilities the Stampers had given their game console.

Rare Vision—Joel Hochberg

Joel Hochberg, a Florida-based veteran of the cutthroat coin-operated business, is the least-known member of the Rare team. With 30 years of experience, Hochberg, the savvy president of Rare Coin-It, Inc., may joke about past mistakes. However, it is his keen leadership that has made Rare an invaluable partner to Nintendo. It was his decision to pull back from the market.

Hochberg has not always predicted market trends with perfect precision. He once made



space in his warehouse by trashing Wurlitzer Juke Boxes that several years later would have become prized collectors items.

Seeing the direction other companies were taking, Hochberg decided not to go with the pack. "We saw a lot of companies porting games over from 8-Bit and other systems," says Hochberg. "Frankly, we didn't want to become a rubber stamp company, so we put our efforts into developing new technology instead of more software."

"As creative people, we didn't want to be a sort-of conversion house for major third-party developers," adds Chris Stamper.

At a casual glance, it may look as if Hochberg and his programmers hibernated through the entire 16-Bit generation of home video gaming. That is not the case. After spending two years developing new technology to enhance games for the 16-Bit Super Nintendo, Rare Limited released its first game in November of 1994—**Donkey Kong Country**. Graphically, this game is so advanced that it out-performs nearly all 32-Bit games. At a time when Nintendo wants to convince people to wait before purchasing new game systems, **Donkey Kong Country** is the best argument imaginable.

Not only has Nintendo trusted its remaining 16-Bit hopes to Rare, but they've also entrusted it with their 64-Bit future. **Killer Instinct**, the 3-D combat game used to demonstrate the power of Nintendo's Ultra 64 game system, was developed by Rare. This is both the flagship game for the Ultra 64 system and also the game Nintendo is using to reintroduce itself to the coin-op market.

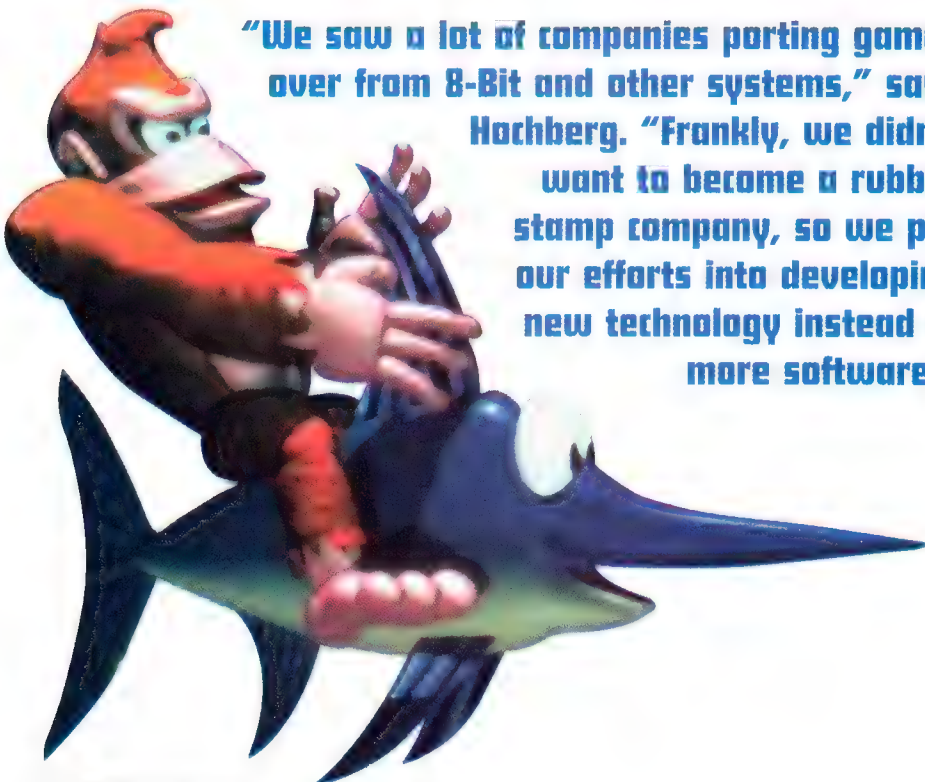
Nintendo has two strategic alliances on which it has based its future—Silicon Graphics, Incorporated and Rare Ltd.

The Miracle Behind the Phenomenon

While there is no question that Tim Stamper is one of the few storytellers blessed with the magic to create the best games, it is his less famous brother, Chris, that has enabled his magic to reach new heights.

"We had a visit from Mr. Takeda (Genyo Takeda—one of Nintendo Co., Ltd.'s three top engineers)," says Chris Stamper. "We decided to show him a demonstration of a

"We saw a lot of companies porting games over from 8-Bit and other systems," says Hochberg. "Frankly, we didn't want to become a rubber stamp company, so we put our efforts into developing new technology instead of more software."



"As creative people, we didn't want to be a sort-of conversion house for major third-party developers,"

boxing game we had created using rendered graphics on a Silicon Workstation. He was very impressed and asked what this would look like on a SNES. So into the evening and the next day, we had two of our engineers work on taking the 24-Bit, true-color imagery and converting it to SNES.

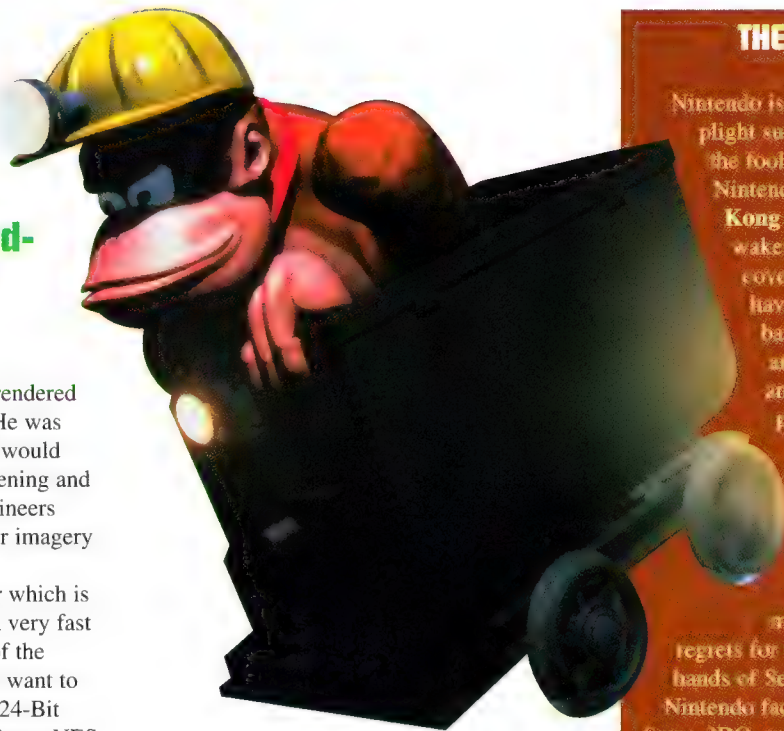
"We've developed our own editor which is basically a small box that contains a very fast processor that we created to do all of the graphic manipulation that we would want to do. That tool enabled us to take the 24-Bit imagery and convert it to what the Super NES would look like. The editor itself was designed so that its display was exactly the same as a Super NES. So what we drew on screen was what we would see on the Super NES."

"When we took the guys from NCL (Nintendo Co., Ltd.) to the art department and showed them what we had, they kept looking under the table," according to Tim Stamper. "I asked what they were doing. They said they were looking for the big computer because they didn't understand that everything was being done in the small box."

While other companies are struggling to convert games from workstations to 32- and 64-Bit systems with a minimum of distortion, Chris Stamper's box allows him to port games over without losing any details, and he can do it in a matter of hours. This allows his brother, Tim, to let his imagination go wild as he throws thousands of details into his games without worrying about the limitation of his game platform.

Donkey Kong Country includes such fine details as lamps buried within a fog bank; the kinds of details that artists creating games for more powerful systems have been unable to port without distortion. This does not reflect the superiority of the SNES as much as the revolutionary abilities of Chris Stamper's mystery box.

Impressed by Chris Stamper's demonstration of power and long aware of Tim's creative abilities, Takeda returned to Japan with news of the boxing game. NCL wholeheartedly supported creating a special flagship SNES game with Rare. When the Stampers suggested creating a new **Donkey Kong** title, Nintendo agreed. Sigeru Miyamoto, who created the original **Donkey Kong** games, faxed Rare some artistic suggestions and



made himself available for consultation, but left the creative work in Tim Stamper's hands.

Mr. Miyamoto was very easy to work with, according to Tim Stamper. "He listens to you and recognizes good ideas."

Though the creation of **Donkey Kong Country** was extremely technical, its beginnings were very simple. Tim Stamper and his crew began by drawing scenes on yellow Post-it Notes and laying them on a piece of posterboard. These sequential composites became the official storyboard for the game.

Next, Rare technicians began the work of designing sets and characters on a Silicon Graphic Workstation. One graphic technician broke a branch from a pine tree and scanned it into the system. He used the scanned branch to color and texture-map trees. He scanned an old shovel to texture-map corrugated steel backgrounds. Donkey Kong, his allies and his enemies were also rendered on Silicon Graphics Workstations.

As expected, Chris Stamper's conversion box was able to translate the objects and characters created on the Silicon workstations to the SNES with almost no distortion. The finished game was so attractive that skeptics accused Nintendo of using screen shots from workstations in their advertising.

Rare and Nintendo have announced that a Game Boy version of **Donkey Kong Country**, titled **Donkey Kong Land**, is in production. Chris Stamper admits that the game is nowhere near as attractive as the SNES version, but claims the smaller version marks a milestone for the hand-held platform. Though they have not announced any titles beyond **Donkey Kong Country** and **Killer Instinct**, Rare has begun work on future

THE GOOD FIGHT

Nintendo is fighting hard to avoid the plight suffered by Donkey Kong, the foolish guerrilla that put Nintendo on the map. In **Donkey Kong Country**, the famous ape wakes up one morning to discover that the evil Kremlings have stolen his entire hoard of bananas. Nintendo executives are hoping that Sega, 3DO, and other competitors don't pull a similar feat with the entire video game market.

Both Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo, and Peter Main, vice president of marketing, freely admit regrets for last year's beating at the hands of Sega. This year, however, Nintendo faces a bigger threat. Sega, Sony, 3DO, and Sony will all have powerful new game systems in 1995 while Nintendo is still months away from releasing their new Ultra 64. Obviously every 32X or Jaguar sold represents one potential Ultra 64 sale that will be either lost or postponed.

"When we said it would take two years to get a 64-Bit system on the market, people said that we had just sown the seeds of our demise," says Peter Main. "I'm up to month 16 and the Sega Saturn is still not a fact in the marketplace. The Sony PlayStation is still not a fact. I don't see the world as having beaten us."

In November, the Sega 32X became a very real fact to the gaming world at large, with immediate projected sales in the millions. At the same time, thanks to Goldstar and Creative Labs, the price of 3DO has dropped dramatically. Sony is gearing up the PlayStation for a September release. With Ultra 64 a minimum of six months to a year from release, Nintendo's world may not look quite as friendly.



HOLIDAY VIDEO GAME PARTY

A guide to video game parties for the naughty and the nice

by Jayson Hill

It's that time of year again—the holiday season! The time to get together with friends and share the holiday spirit ... and just maybe recruit a few new video game hobbyists.

If you have never had a holiday party, it's time you did. It's not difficult, and is a great way to let friends know what their friendship has meant during the year.

Putting video gaming into the mix can also add a flair to the evening's events that will set the party apart from all the others the guests are likely to attend. It also introduces more people to the fascinating hobby of video gaming. Sound good? Then let's get into the practical considerations of adding video games to a party.

Invite All Your Friends

Limiting the guest list to friends who already enjoy video games won't win any gaming converts: you'll be preaching to the choir. Look at this party as an opportunity to share the hobby with people who currently don't know how much fun video games can be, or that the games are for all ages.

Have Enough Systems

A good rule of thumb is to have one system for every four people attending the party. That works out to two people playing and coaching on a system and two enjoying the other activities the party has to offer: eating, drinking, talking and laying a line on the opposite sex.

Most of us have limited resources. We have only so many game systems, and probably even fewer televisions to which we can connect them. If you need five systems at the party and only have enough equipment for two, there are solutions.

Friends are probably the best place to make up equipment shortfalls, especially fellow video game enthusiasts. Tell them why you want to borrow the stuff, and more than likely they'll be glad to loan you what you need. (Make sure to invite them before asking to borrow equipment.) They may even help you set up. If friends can't help, there's always rental. Though not the cheapest way to go,



you can be assured of having the equipment when it is needed.

A real first-timer's mistake is to set up too many systems. If every square inch of the house is filled with video games, it will alienate the people who don't like video games, because there is no place they can get away from them. People also need places to sit, stand and talk. If there are video games everywhere, talking groups will block access to systems or those groups will be broken up by players. Neither alternative is acceptable. Use sound judgment and common sense about the situation when making the calculation of how many systems to set up.

Smart System Setup

Remember, it's possible that someone will be at the party who has never touched a game machine. To insure that the equipment survives the night, it is important to post a few rules and take some simple precautions.

Two posted rules will usually suffice: "No food or drinks on game systems," and "Turn off game system power before removing or inserting cartridges." These two simple rules will avoid the most damaging things that can happen to systems.

Hand controllers are the weakest link in the hardware and new players tend to be the hardest players on controllers. These two facts indicate how important it is that the sturdiest controllers be used at the party. Keep spares handy, if you have them.

When deciding where to place systems, avoid putting all the systems in one dark video ghetto room. That would have the effect of dividing the party into those who play video games and those who don't. Sprinkle systems throughout the party area. In this way, those who initially think they don't want to play may see something that will pique their interest and give it a try.

Keep the Games Simple

Don't put out games that take a day of reading instructions and practicing to get anywhere on. If at all possible, offer games that a novice can sit down to and have an immediate positive experience. It's a plus if an experienced player can also find them a challenge. Admittedly, finding such a game is a tall order. The science of picking a game with these qualities is inexact, so just go with your gut feelings and observe the reactions of players for future reference.

Examples of games that have worked well for parties are:

Devil's Crush or **Alien Crush** pinball on the TurboGrafx-16, **Tempest 2000** on the Jaguar, any of the **Pac-Man** family on

many systems, **Donkey Kong** on various systems, **Space Wars** on the Vectrex, **Pilotwings** on the SNES and (for the real novice) on the Atari 2600.

Don't Forget to Feed the Guests

Sound decisions about the types of food served, and how they are served, save systems and make clean up easier the next day. Messy and sticky foods seem to find a way into controllers: keep them to a minimum. Serve drinks in cans whenever possible. Cans spill less rapidly than cups, so there is a fighting chance to save a system when a spill occurs. Nothing will kill the party faster than running out of food—have plenty.

Well, that's about all any party giver needs to know when it comes to throwing a great holiday video game party. Experience will teach the rest. Think you can do it? Like I said before, the holidays are a great time to have a party. Most people are in a happy mood and are receptive to something new. Take advantage of that, and you might just be able to drag video games one step closer to becoming part of mainstream entertainment, as well as having a great time in the process.

Hey, somebody wrap a little tinsel around that monitor!

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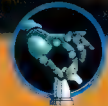
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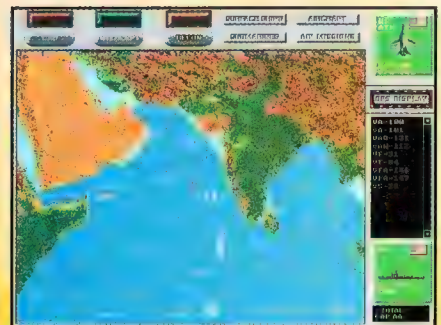


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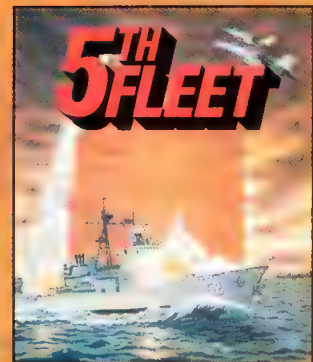


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THE NET

Hitchhiking on the Information Highway

The first thing that must be understood, to effectively make our defense, is that the members of the EG Network On-line Team (NOT) aren't what can be considered "fully socialized" individuals. We are, first and foremost, hardcore bitheads. We are proud of our scientific calculators and lament the death of the slide rule because we think those cases look really cool hanging on a belt. You need to keep this in mind.

Our hapless phone drone, however, doesn't really understand our mindset. Just because we listen to the hippest music, tend to ride motorcycles at unreasonable speeds and hang out with members of the opposite sex at clubs, he got fooled into thinking that we aren't really serious wireheads. Like it is just a job or something. We attribute his injuries directly to this mistaken impression.

You see, sometime last week, he pulled a box out of the shreds of a Fed Ex wrapper, held it up proudly and spoke the fateful words: "Hey guys, look, the new copy of *Hitchhiking on the Information Highway* from Moon Valley just came in!" And then, so help us, he smiled.

For those of you who aren't aware, *Hitchhiking* is a starter CD for net surfing. One of those automated guides to learning to connect to the digiverse.

First was a growl. The most ominous sound of all was the silence as the entire NOT stopped hitting the keys on their terminals.

"This is supposed to be a great starter package," he said, voice wavering a bit.

It was, as we told the police for the report, a pizza bone that hit him first. But the stale crust hadn't even had time to fall to the floor before a steady stream of mice, keyboards, scientific calculators, gender changers and PDAs were thrown at him with just slightly less velocity than major league fast balls. The doctors later said that it was the Pogues CD lodged behind his left ear that did the real damage.

We all stood around muttering as the EMTs worked to stabilize him.



"Thinking we need a starter set, serves him right."

"Like we can't download our own tools."

"I was born with domain.name."

One of the EMTs, wheeling our drone out to the ambulance, happened to look over at one of the terminals.

"Hey, that's that on-line stuff, right? Man, I've heard it's great, but it seems too hard to learn how to use," he said right as he left.

We just stood there looking at each other sheepishly and finally approached the offending box, took out the CD and slotted it into one of our terminals.

Two days of exhaustive testing later we had come to a unanimous decision. We wish we would have had one of these when we were starting out.

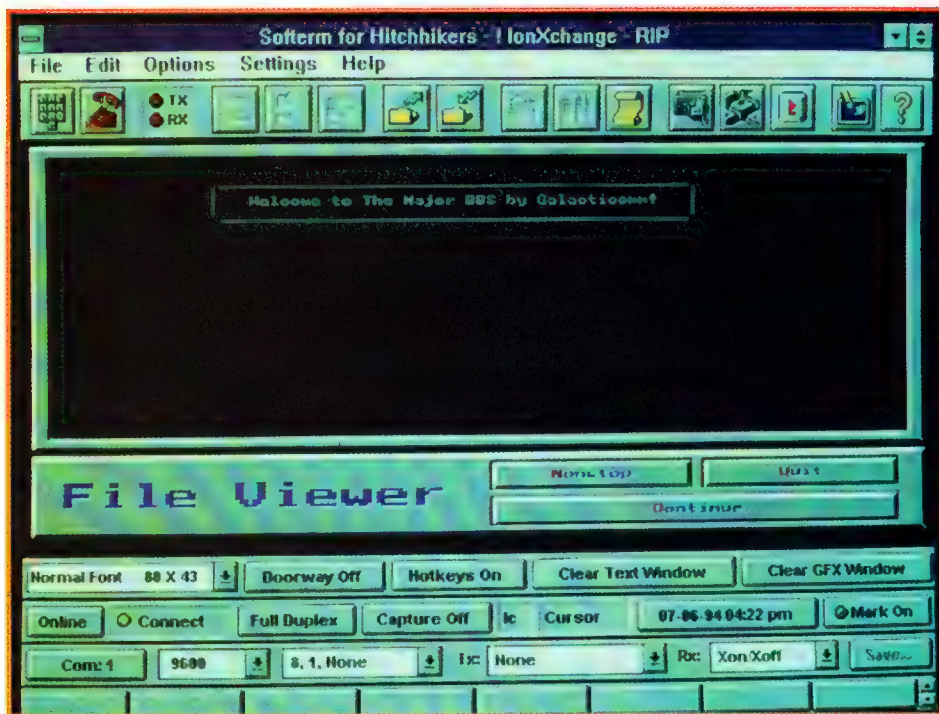
The first thing to be understood about the Moon Valley offering is that it isn't a product, as such. This is not some integrated package created by some new firm that might or might not hit the nail on the head for any particular user's needs. Instead, *Hitchhiking* is compilation of products put on one CD. Most of these products are available elsewhere as stand-alone packages and the majority are available free of charge.

Now an astute reader is probably asking why they would want to pay money for something they can get for free, and here we run into one of the paradoxes of the net.

There is a wealth of information and tools available for the net, from starter guides to hardcore tools to in-depth technical references, all available free of charge. The catch? You have to download them. From? You guessed it, the net. Now if you need information on how to get on and navigate the net, and the only place to get it for free is on the net—Well, it's a definite chicken-egg situation.

However, what *Hitchhiking* does is provide some of the best tools and references for the beginner available, on one CD that automatically loads the whole kit and caboodle on your hard drive and makes navigating it a snap, solving the problem in one fell swoop.

Included with *Hitchhiking* are an interesting potpourri of software offerings. There are signup kits to Compuserve, America Online, Genie, Prodigy and Netcom. These kits are the exact same ones you would get if you sent to the company in question for them. However, they all come on the CD this way, and you only load the ones you want.



Next are all the training materials, which fall into two classes: some of the greatest text references ever written for the net, and some of the most useless multimedia films ever produced about the subject of computing.

Let's get the bad stuff out of the way first.

The movies included with *Hitchhiking* are really poor. For starters, they are way too short. A set of them is provided and each one is about a minute long. In a minute of time, it is rather hard to get deeply into computer topics, and these videos don't. They have just about enough time to say things like, "A computer is a big box on your desk with a keyboard and a thing like a TV on top," before they kick out. Skip the movies.

The text references, however, are the same ones the NOT passes out to newbies: *Zen and the Art of Internet*, *Hitchhiking the Internet*, a good Internet Services List and *EFF's Guide to the Internet* are among the offerings on this CD. Really the only thing missing is a copy of the Jargon File, but it is not a required reference at all, just a fun diversion, so it probably doesn't belong here.

The package also includes a few Windoze utilities, including the great **Icon Hear It Too-Lite** package of Windows customizations and tricks. This is a wondrous package for those who aren't having Windows speed problems; it provides custom cursors, speech packages and other performance-eating nifties for your Windows, if you are so inclined. A set of clocking utilities are included also, and one of these, while looking like fluff at first, is really a pretty useful tool.

The Iconnect systemeters at first look like eye candy, with their cute little Mousometer, which shows the number of feet traveled in a day by your mouse. But don't let the cute fool you. This little panel is actually mondo, at a

glance it will let you know how many minutes you have spent on-line, the condition of your modem, total memory available, memory available on a disk and it keeps an on-line log.

But the real star of this package is SoftTerm for Windows, a full-bore, hardcore

communications package for Windows.

While the Internet and various commercial on-line services get all the press these days, everyone who is a serious wirehead has a soft spot in their heart for the simple community BBS. With the introduction of RIPTerm allowing these humble local services to provide high-res graphics, there is some really interesting action in some quarters of the BBS scene. SoftTerm is the way to get there.

The NOT are ardent users of Mustang's Qmodem for Windows, but we have found that SoftTerm measures up to Qmodem in every respect, and even has some nifty features that don't come with the standard Qmodem implementation. For example, it has a SLIP kernel for direct Internet connection. But the most charming part of the SoftTerm package is a database of over 12,000 local BBSes, with a search routine. We found our favorite little BBS, The Polaris Club (304-525-2960) listed right alongside some of the big boys in the database. When you find a BBS you think you might like, just double click and the program will hook you up to it.

Overall, *Hitchhiking on the Information Highway* is a great package. For those users who are experienced net mavens, there isn't a lot here except SoftTerm that they will need, but for newbies or less experienced users of the information ether, this is one of the best ways to painlessly become a net wizard.





We plan to apologize to our phone drone just as soon as the hospital releases him.

Marvel Back In News

Marvel, according to reports in *PC Week*, will be a part of the next beta test of the Windows '95 software. Marvel is the new rumored on-line service from Microsoft that is expected to be a standard part of the Windows '95 package. The official name for the service (which Microsoft keeps denying, so it is kind of odd that it has an official name) is said to be the Microsoft Network.

A second beta is expected around the time of this printing that will send out the new software and service to over 400,000 beta testers worldwide. The formal release of the much delayed Windows '95, and apparently the Microsoft Network, is scheduled for summer of '95.

Prodigy On Internet

Prodigy joins the bandwagon of providers attempting to commercialize the Internet. A new service, AstraNet, has been implemented to allow Prodigy to expand its Internet presence and also enter the potentially lucrative Internet information packaging and partnership game.

The service will initially offer sports, financial and news information for free to those accessing their homepage on the Internet. More in-depth information will be added in stages, in a pay-to-play format. AstraNet is located at www.astranet.com for WWW users.

In other news, Prodigy has followed up on their trial work and expanded officially into Canada.

For the moment the service is going to be offered the same as in the U.S. and a special Canadian area will group subjects of Canadian interest on the service. However plans are being made with Southam, Inc., for a branch of the service to be implemented that will directly speak to Canadian lifestyles and interests.

Surprise, Surprise ... AOL Making Strong Internet Bid

America Online has acquired two Internet software companies in a bid to set a new defacto standard on the Internet for information delivery.

Booklink Technologies, one of the two acquired companies, produces InternetWorks, a WWW browser that is already getting good publicity in the industry. AOL officials have expressed the hope that InternetWorks will become the defacto standard for WWW access, putting the product directly in competition with the tremendously successful Mosaic software.

AOL has also expressed an intent to provide an Internet-only service in the coming months. Watch this column for more details as they become available.

MCI to Provide Newspaper as Part of New Service

MCI, the long distance telephone provider, is making a jump expected of many telephone services by moving into the on-line world.

The service, Friends and Family Mail, is going to include News-In-Motion, an electronic daily newspaper. The paper will include all the standard fare of a daily paper and feature the New York Times Crossword Puzzle. Color photos, animation and sound will be a standard part of the package.

Most of the Friends and Family Mail services are centered on mail delivery on-line, including the ability to send greeting cards.

Holiday Inn, For the Discriminating Wirehead

Those of us addicted to on-line services and digital information have all found that travel presents something of a chore. Hooking up the laptop and all the hardware that makes us feel at home can be something of a hassle in some hotel rooms.

However, these things will be a historical problem if Holiday Inn's new trials work out. The hotel chain is planning a 12-site interactive trial, giving customers access to a number of digital services, including e-mail, access to on-line services, information services, video on demand and a number of other handy electronic sources for the traveller. Currently, talks are reportedly being held between Holiday Inn and a number of sources, including the Sega Channel, so don't leave that Genesis at home, folks.

Sega In Cyberspace and on CompuServe

Sega of America has opened up two new outlets in cyberspace, a WWW homepage and a new area on CompuServe. The new areas give Sega users the ability to download text, video and other materials relating to their favorite gaming platform. Feedback to Sega officials in the form of e-mail is also available.

On CompuServe, realtime chat with Sega officials is available on a scheduled basis. Sega of America President Tom Kalinske was a recent guest on CompuServe, where he answered questions about the company and the games for an hour with users.

Sega's homepage is located at www.sega.com.

.....
By John Withers

Retraction: Due to a source error, the November copy *EG* erroneously reported that **On-line Battle Tech** was available on the Delphi service. This information is incorrect. Though Delphi does have many Kesmai games available, **Battle Tech** is not one of them and is not expected to have **Battle Tech** in the immediate future. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

CAN YOU SURVIVE RUSH HOUR AT 30,000 FEET?

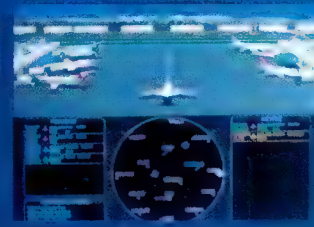
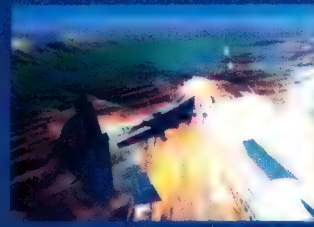
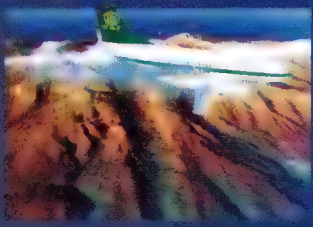
AIR HAVOC CONTROLLER

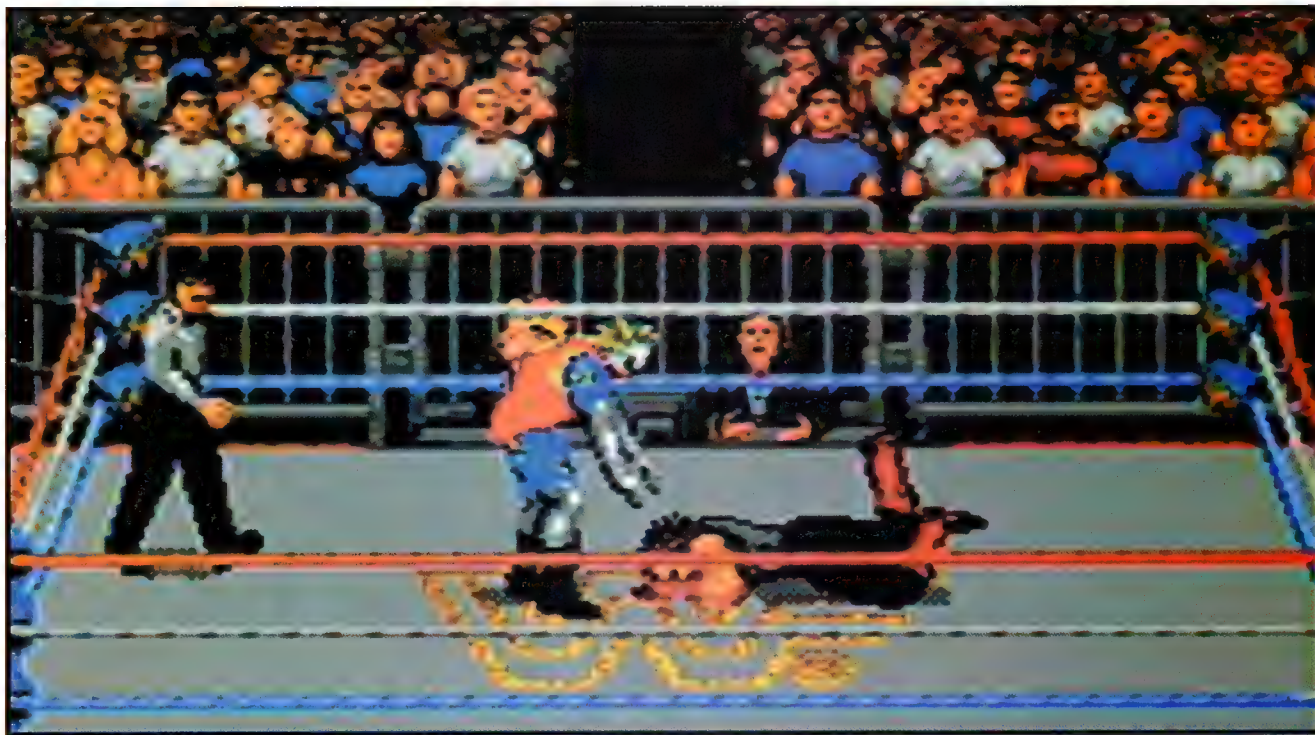


The air is thick with tension. Not to mention planes. Sixteen accidents waiting to happen. Thousands of lives on board. And you're in the control tower. Forget about the single radar screen. This is Air Havoc Controller, the stunningly realistic Air Traffic Control simulator on CD-ROM from Trimark Interactive. With 3-D computer graphics so true-to-life that if they were any more realistic... you'd be history.



Air Havoc Controller... landing soon in a store near you.





PILE DRIVER

Acclaim Delivers with WWF Raw

When Acclaim first launched its line of WWF-based wrestling sims, the prospects looked dim. The wrestlers barely resembled their prototypes, everybody had the same moves and style and icons—representing everything from the Honky Tonk Man's guitar to Hogan's crucifix—periodically floated across the screen, serving as power-ups.

Over the years, however, developer Sculptured Software has smoothed out the rough edges, added features and improved the graphics to the point where **WWF Raw**—based on the license to the popular USA Network show, *Monday Night Raw*—is the finest wrestling simulation ever created, surpassing even American Technos' WWF coin-op series.

WWF Raw offers wrestling and fight game fans the richest variety of moves, options, bells and whistles ever seen in a grappling sim. A dozen WWF wrestlers, including newcomers such as Doink, Owen Hart, Luna Vachon and the 1-2-3 Kid, are available for action in any of five match formats. There are one-on-one (singles) matches, tag teamers, Bedlam bouts,

TEEN SPECS

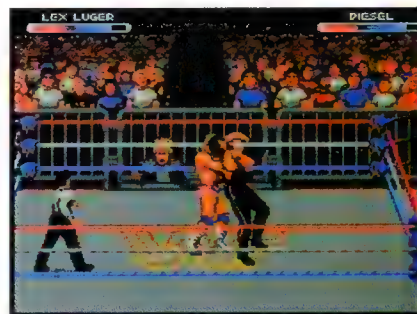
PUBLISHER: Acclaim
SYSTEM: Genesis
THEME: Wrestling
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1-4
LEVELS: N/A

Survivor Series, Royal Rumble and Raw Endurance matches. Bedlam matches force a tag team to defeat *both* members of the opposing duo, while the Survivor Series format is essentially the same, but with two four-wrestler teams. The Royal Rumble is an interesting variant on the old Battle Royal concept. The spin here, however, is that the wrestlers don't all start out in the ring at the same time; they enter one by one, according to a predetermined order, and elimination occurs only when a wrestler is thrown out of the ring onto the floor.

The new game also allows wrestlers to jump off any of the four turnbuckles, features both a bucket and a chair as outside-the-ring weapons and even introduces

"secret" moves and random outside interference.

Of course, there are still problems with the older game elements, and even more serious complaints concerning some of the more recent additions. The "Brawl" matches are simply dumb—the two wrestlers fight until one's energy bar is exhausted. In a pseudo-sport where matches traditionally end with a pinfall, submission or disqualification, there is no dramatic satisfaction whatsoever in having a match simply stop while both wrestlers are still standing and ready to go. At the very least, the wrestler whose energy has run out should collapse, indicating that



they cannot continue. And the series' most obvious imperfection is the over-reliance on button-pushing to determine dominance when two grapplers lock up. Repeatedly pushing one or two buttons is among the most boring exercises in the video game canon, and the WWF games seem inextricably locked into this dull play mechanic.

WWF Raw also introduces the concept of category ratings for wrestlers, who are gauged according to Speed, Strength, Weight and Stamina. Problem: something very important is missing here. Where is the height rating? Without a height rating,



a 375 lb. wrestler who is 6'10" is treated the same as a grappler of equal weight who stands a foot shorter. By failing to take height into consideration, the accuracy of the entire simulation is thrown off.

An even greater problem, however, is the manner in which these ratings are integrated into game play. Sure, the 1-2-3 Kid is a lot faster than Bam Bam Bigelow, but the speed just makes him tougher to control, and serves no real advantage in play-

ing the game. And it's still just as easy for Yokozuna to throw a dropkick as Owen Hart, despite a gap in size large enough to choke the late Andre the Giant.

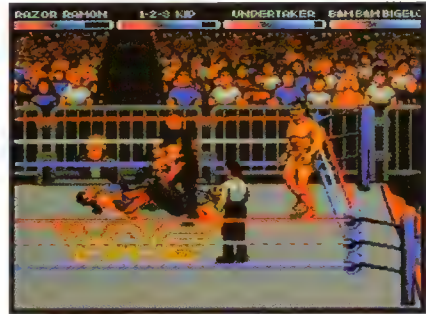
Another serious problem with **Raw** is its introduction of a female wrestler—Bam Bam Bigelow's former valet, Luna Vachon—who competes equally with the men. Not to sound like a misogynist or anything, but not even a hydraulic lift could suspend my disbelief when Luna runs into 568 lb. Yokozuna and knocks him over like a duckpin. Certainly, if Acclaim and/or the WWF felt the need to add Luna, they could just as easily have eliminated, say, Lex Luger (who has already been in several of these games and whose electronic simulacrum doesn't look much like him) and added WWF Woman's Champ, Alundra Blaze (a.k.a., Madusa Macelli), so Luna would have someone realistic to fight.

The game's greatest affront, however, is its integration of the fashionable "secret moves" into the program. God knows it's tough enough for a wrestling simulation to maintain credibility as real *mano a mano* conflict, but when Owen Hart starts spinning like a tornado with fists, any sense that we are engaged in a simulation of professional wrestling is toast.

There's certainly nothing intrinsically wrong with adding secret moves to a wrestler's repertoire, but they have to be maneuvers that the wrestler could credibly perform.

So, despite its pre-eminence, Acclaim's WWF games still have a way to go before they match, say, EA Sports' NHL or NFL

franchises. Movement is still hopelessly horizontal, with no action occurring on a vertical plane (a wrestler can only criss-cross off the ropes going left or right), and, as we have seen, several danger



signals are emerging. But for all of that, wrestlers like Bam Bam Bigelow and Brett Hart are remarkable reproductions of their real-life prototypes. And the use of computer-controlled wrestlers in tag-team action so that a lone player controls only one member of a team is a tremendous enhancement.

Wrestling is the toughest of all athletic entertainment forms to simulate, because it is not real. The matches are choreographed, the outcomes are predetermined and a wrestler's primary concern is in keeping his opponent from serious harm, while looking to all the world as if they are beating him to death. As a result, the people who create wrestling simulations must attempt to re-create the illusion of combat. Sculptured has come closer than anyone else, but they still have miles to go. **A-** (Bill Kunkel)

RATING THE WRESTLERS

How do the character wrestlers in **WWF Raw** rate as re-creations of the real wrestlers? Let's take a quick look at some of the competitors of WWF and see:

1-2-3 Kid—His hyper-speed, as mentioned in the review, is almost a drawback. He moves so quickly, it will be hard for players to draw him under their control.

Bam Bam Bigelow—He looks exactly like the real Bam Bam, complete with head tattoos. Better yet, his wrestling style is a solid reproduction of the real Bigelow—but why is it so difficult to execute his finisher?

Doink—Looks great, wrestles like the real thing (though several wrestlers have worn the greasepaint, they all maintained a similar style), and the

Whoopee Cushion is a killer move.

Owen Hart—Wrestling moves are too similar to Brett—Owen has a more high-flying style—and the ratings are all screwed up. Owen is rated two points (on a scale of 10) stronger than Bret (absurd), and two points slower (ridiculous). I think the designers were way off base here.

Luna Vachon—Just what is she doing here fighting monsters like Undertaker and Diesel? It is total lunacy, as are her ratings (she has the same Strength rating as Yokozuna!!).

Yokozuna—Speaking of the big



Samoan who once wrestled as "Kokina Maximus," his ratings are a bit screwy, but he looks good, and there's a perverse thrill to be gotten from having him throw a series of half a dozen dropkicks in a row.

COLD WAR ACTION RETRO

Signpost up ahead: you have just entered—the *Red Zone*

In just 24 hours the world will be a desolate wasteland. Only an elite commando team and their Apache helicopter can save the planet from nuclear annihilation.

Sound like a challenge? **Red Zone**, from Time Warner Interactive, is just that. As an action-adventure game, **Red Zone**



uses the newly developed Super Spin algorithm that creates an animated 3-D world for a new genre of game play.

The scenario unfolds in the fashion of an action movie, with intense opening graphics that inspire the armchair warrior with images of heavy artillery, cruising tanks and the crazed communist dictator Ivan Retovitz. He is ready to unleash nuclear death upon the world if it does not accept his annexation of a small neighboring country.

The only hope for the free world is a handpicked commando team chosen for their weapons and martial arts abilities. The three members of the commando team each have their own special abilities. Shades, the leader, can fire a gun and throw grenades at targets behind boxes or sandbags. Rocco, the heavy weapons specialist, carries a big flamethrower and rocket launcher for taking out targets at a distance. Mirage, the infiltrator, has a gun and throws knives which then can be retrieved.

The commandoes penetrate the enemy defenses in an Apache attack helicopter. This special chopper bristles with weapons designed to take on the country's defenses. These weapons include a 30mm

chaingun, Hellfire Tank Killer missiles, 70mm rockets and Stinger missiles for air-to-air combat. Each of these weapons has a limited supply of ammunition, so care should be taken in their consumption.

The chopper also contains a satellite radar system, automatic night tracking system and an intelligence grid map system to help plan the attack to wipe out Ivan's military might.

With the intelligence grid, the player finds information about enemy troops and weapons, supplies for the chopper and prime targets that must be cleared in order to advance to the next stage.

Upon reaching an enemy outpost or other destination, the team must land the Apache and infiltrate Ivan's defenses to

obtain the desired goal. Each mission has circumstances that lend themselves to a specific character. The player should evaluate the situation before choosing a team member to complete the mission.

Ground combat is not only a series of obstacles, but a problem that requires as much brain power as firepower. Each

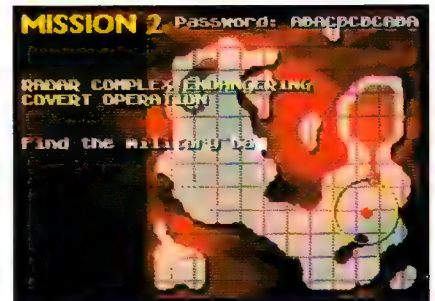


character has only one life, and once killed, a different character must be chosen to complete the mission.

If all three team members are killed or the chopper is destroyed, Ivan wins and the world becomes a nuclear wasteland.

A Password Feature lets players start games at the beginning of the last stage in which they played. Continues are not offered.

Other options include a Musical Preview that allows the player to sample the 16 different soundtracks. The music can get old after a while, but is not much of a nuisance. It captures the mood of desperate combat without becoming a distraction from the rest of the game.



Ivan's climb to power in Zyristan State and the cruelties that he has caused are chronicled in the History Option.

Graphically the game is impressive: tables and obstacles can be climbed, rats scurry around the enemy's underground bases and computer terminals even have potted plants. (These plants cannot be burned by the flamethrower, which seems odd, although human enemies flame up quite nicely.)

Red Zone is not a game for young children. Its violence is extreme and can be quite gory (such as smoking corpses and dead bodies lying around). Play is also difficult to master and requires a lot of effort. It can become frustrating in some levels. Another cause for frustration is the series of screens that must be passed before one can resume play. Watching the mushroom cloud explode over and over can become tedious.

Thematically, **Red Zone** seems outdated. The Cold War has been over for quite some time. The Communists just don't seem to be much of a threat to world peace; even the name Ivan Retovitz is pretty stale and unimaginative.

Red Zone will appeal to those hardcore combat game vets who enjoy both air and ground tactics. It has a few flaws in the story and the graphics go a bit far in portraying the enemy's lifeless corpses, but then again, war is not pretty.

Gamers that enjoy a challenge may now strap on their machine guns and get ready to make the world safe for democracy. **B** (Christy Johnson)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Time Warner Interactive
SYSTEM: Genesis
THEME: Action/Adventure
MEGABITS: 18
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 10

FACE YOUR DESTINY.



THE FIRST TIME, YOU WON.

THE SECOND TIME, THEY WON.

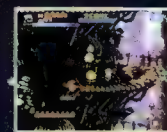
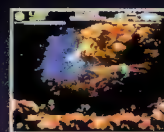
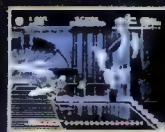
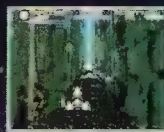
THIS TIME... THERE WON'T BE A NEXT TIME.

What you are about to experience will either destroy you—or make you a hero. Vader. Jabba. The rancor. The Death Star. The Emperor (yes, the Emperor!). Mode 7 graphics.

Your worst nightmare brought to life in a massive 16-meg galaxy far, far away.

But don't panic, young Jedi. You get to play five different *Star Wars*® characters, including Wicket the Ewok and Princess Leia. Plus, you've got the Force on your side.

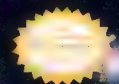
Training is over. Prepare to face your destiny!



3880 Berman Blvd.
Suite 305
Los Angeles, CA 90068



SUPER STAR WARS **RETURN OF THE JEDI**



LICENSED BY

Nintendo

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A MATTER OF CONTROL

Uncle *Syndicate* wants you. Now!

Adult 16-Bit gamers are the neglected stepchildren of electronic gaming. They watch scads of games come out for the 12- to 16-year-olds, and salivate enviously over the games that come out for their friends with computers and CD multimedia consoles. Then they sigh, and play a few rounds of *Star Control*, waiting for *Space Hulk* to come to a 16-Bit platform.



Not that there aren't any good games for grownups. Koei, for example, has put out many original wargames, and a small but steady flow of converted computer games relieves the monotony of run-of-the-mill RPGs and fighting games.

One of the best computer games to come to 16-Bit lately is *Syndicate*, from British designers Bullfrog. In this hard-hitting game, players rule a criminal syndicate with the goal of taking over a grim, cyberpunk world where electronic drugs keep the populace placid and syndicates have replaced traditional government.

The player assembles a team of four cybernetic agents who are inserted into a target country, where one mission must be performed before that country falls under the control of the syndicate. Each land is a different mission, which vary from straightforward elimination of other syndicates' agents, to multipart tasks with several goals. Ruling the world is a simple matter of controlling all 50 countries.

After a country has fallen, the player sets the tax rate and collects the revenue. Money makes the syndicate go 'round, and the player will need this income to

buy weapons, ammunition, cybernetic implants and research. Don't jack the tax rate up too high, though. If taxes are punishingly high for very long, the populace will rebel, taxes will not be collected and the player will have to complete the mission again.

Research is a prime cash drain in *Syndicate*. A good range of equipment is available to players at the beginning of the game, but to get the really powerful items like advanced cyber-mods, flame throwers, miniguns, lasers and gauss guns, research must be funded. As the player puts more money into research, the faster the items become available. By allowing players to research what they wish, at whatever pace they want, Bullfrog has invested a great deal of flexibility and replay value into *Syndicate*.

If taxation and research sound too abstract, let's talk about the missions. The player begins the game with a pool of eight agents (more may be recruited later), from which a team of up to four agents is assembled. After choosing the target country on the world map, the player reads a mission brief which outlines the goals. With this knowledge in mind, the team is assembled and equipped with whatever weapons and mods are deemed necessary.

Cyber-mods affect different areas of agent performance. Chest mods allow the agent to absorb more damage, arm mods allow them to carry heavy loads, etc. There are also leg, brain, eye and heart cyber-mods. Research lets the player develop up to three versions of each, for a total of 18 possible modifications.

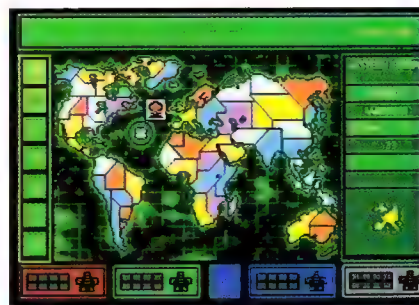
With the press of a button the team is inserted into the target area. The view is from an angled, overhead perspective. A line of text at the bottom of the screen reminds the player what the goal is, while boxes display the health, current weapon and API status of the agents. API is Adrenaline, Perception and Intelligence, and another unique feature of *Syndicate*.

Each agent is hardwired with drug administration units that raise or lower their adrenaline, perception and intelligence. Adrenaline controls how fast the agent moves, perception determines reaction time and intelligence dictates how the computer-controlled agents will react to any given situation. In game terms, this means that each agent has a variable level of artificial intelligence when not under direct player control. This was a novel feature for a computer game and seems almost wondrous on the Genesis.

Various button combinations make for different, useful API settings, but the player should take care not to dose the agents too much. They quickly build a tolerance to the drugs and using them too much will make them lose their effectiveness.

The player either controls one agent at a time or controls the whole group. Even when in a group, the computer-controlled agents are smart, laying down covering fire and moving out of range of enemy weapons when prudent.

It's ironic that a game that is so much about control; controlling the world, controlling the agents, controlling the AI, should have such a problem with control. Control is *Syndicate's* greatest failing. The Genesis doesn't have enough buttons, and the D pad is imprecise at best. It can be very frustrating to fight through a long mission, only to have an agent killed by a slip of the control pad. Mastering the controls is part of the challenge of any game, but this goes far beyond that.



In the end, *Syndicate* is a hell of a lot of fun. Great action, flexibility and lots of hours of game play give *Syndicate* unmatched depth of play. If it were easier to control, it could vie for game of the year, but for now, it'll just have to settle for a ... ■ (John Wesley Hardin)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
SYSTEM: Genesis
THEME: Action/Strategy
MEGABITS: 16
PLAYERS: 1 or 2
LEVELS: 50

ARE YOU UP TO WEARING THE HAT?

INDIANA JONES' Greatest Adventures

PLAY THE TRILOGY
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
THE TEMPLE OF DOOM
THE LAST CRUSADE

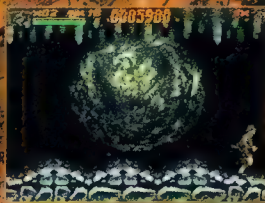
Just because you can name all the bad guys from the Indiana Jones trilogy doesn't mean you've earned the right to wear his hat.

If you're going to wear the Hat, you've got to be sharp with your wits. Quick with your whip. And crazy enough to travel to the most dangerous points on the globe in search of lost treasures. Just like Indy did on the big screen.

Only this isn't a movie. And if you're not Indy enough, you'll get crushed—hat and all!



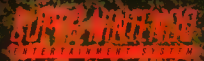
It wouldn't be Indy without Mode 7 graphics... Whoa, Dr. Jones, look out for those Messerschmitts!!!



You'll need your Indy ingenuity to survive the likes of Rene Bollog, Colonel Vogel and all those booby traps.



Raiders of the Lost Ark, The Temple of Doom, The Last Crusade... Three adventures. All yours!



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Generation Gap

Star Trek Generations: Beyond the Nexus

Star Trek Generations is the seventh installment in the *Star Trek* movie series, and **Star Trek Generations: Beyond the Nexus** is the first Game Boy cart to exploit the new license.

The cart closely follows the plot of the film which brings the two generations of *Star Trek* together. Trekkers can finally see (most of) their heroes from both series, but the real question, Can Jean-Luc Picard kick James T. Kirk's butt? will have to go unanswered here.

Instead of a homogenous adventure, **Generations** is comprised of several distinct sub-games. The player works through the story by accomplishing a series of tasks and missions. The missions take the form of ship-to-ship space combat, navigation and away team missions, while the tasks are puzzles and games of logic. Some invoke the feeling of the *Star Trek* universe better than others.

The tasks come in two flavors. One has the player construct power conduits in a race against time, a la that old Game Boy standby, **Pipedreams**. Players are given random pieces of power conduit which they must assemble to channel the flow of power coming from the input end. Let the power flow unrestricted into the energy grid and there'll be no more slack time in Ten Forward for you or anybody else.

The other task is analysis. During the adventure players will have to conduct several types of analysis. They're needed to interpret communication frequencies, determine energy signatures, search for organic or chemical elements and other vital things. It's a game of memory and deduction. In one typical analysis puzzle, the player is given four slots to fill from a group of six symbols. The player has a limited number of attempts to place the correct symbols in their proper order. This is harder than it sounds and is an enjoyable challenge.

The space combat is less gratifying. The very first mission is a long battle with two renegade Tholian ships. The problem is that it is a long battle, whereas space combat is almost always quick and dirty in



Star Trek. Maneuvering a star ship in combat should never become monotonous, as this first battle threatens to do. For reasons not explained in the game or documentation, the *Enterprise* has no photon torpedoes during this first mission. Maybe that's why it seems to drag a little. Besides, the *Enterprise* is Star Fleet's ship of the line. Why can't it beat a couple of measly Tholian ships as fast as it takes out a Klingon Bird of Prey later in the game? Luckily, the designers don't rely on this one mechanic to carry the entire game.

Battle is conducted first-person, through the *Enterprise*'s Main View Screen. A Tactical Sensors Screen is accessed with the Select button. Here, the player gets a zoomable, overhead view of the *Enterprise* and surrounding space. Ships on this screen may be scanned for damage, a good way to keep apprised of how a battle is going.

Away team scenarios are an important part of the missions. The member(s) of the away team are viewed from an overhead perspective. Players are given a short time to thread their way through maze-like corridors to a goal, against adversaries who either must be eliminated or avoided.

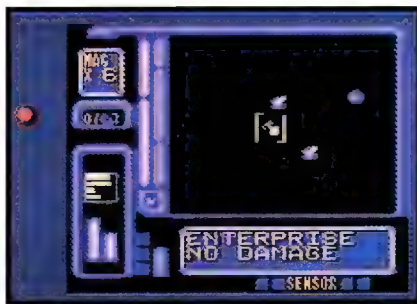
The last type of mission puts the player in charge of navigating the *Enterprise*. Whether into orbit or around dangerous obstacles, gamers have but one chance to successfully steer the ship through a series of target matrices which appear as squares on-screen. The player must use the Game Boy control pad to steer the ship through the center of these squares. They are aided by directional arrows that point to the way to the next matrix, and a bar graph that corresponds to the number of matrices

which must be flown through.

Each stage is set up by a screen where we see a digitized picture of whichever character is performing the mission. A paragraph of text tells us what must be done to make the mission a success, e.g., "Sulu must re-route power conduits to maintain the shield strength of the *Enterprise*." If the player fails, the bad guys get away, or more often, the *Enterprise* is destroyed. Either way the game is over.

Five passwords allow players to resume play between every three levels or so. One final password allows access to the last stages of the game. Because the game gives away the ending to the movie, the only way to get the password is to see the movie. It seems like pretty savvy marketing on the part of Paramount Pictures. If one absolutely refuses to see the film, the password can be obtained from Absolute's game counselors. Because there aren't very many passwords, players will replay a lot of the same scenes, including some of the longer, most difficult ones. After a while, this ceases to entertain.

Graphically, **Star Trek Generations** is as sophisticated as any Game Boy cart



could be. There's nothing really eye popping here, no great animations or anything, but the digitized images are nicely done, and nothing stands out as being badly done either. The sound is also pretty workmanlike. Nothing annoys, but nothing seems to stand out.

Star Trek Generations: Beyond the Nexus is a challenging game, targeted at older Game Boy players. There's a great deal of depth here and gamers can spend many hours playing it. Whether they choose to really depends on their fondness for all things Trek. Casual fans of the license will probably have less fun than hardcore devotees. **+** (John W. Hardin)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Absolute
SYSTEM: Game Boy
THEME: Action/Adventure
MEGABITS: 1
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 18/19

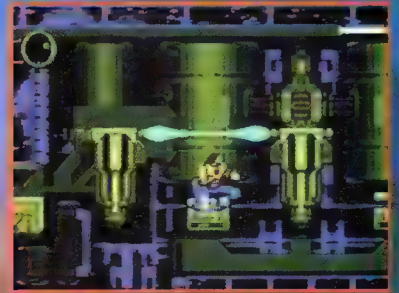
What Would You Give To Know Who You Are?

A quest through a ravaged, perilous world.
A strategy adventure enfolded in a riddle.
And at its heart, a truth that changes everything.

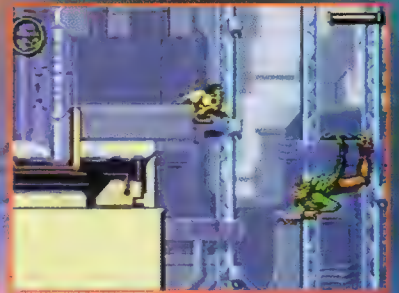
- Strategy... combat... adventure... and a search for the truth.
- Multiple intricate levels, spread across 6 sectors of a perilous, mysterious world.
- Incredible moves and powers, including the powerful Energy Radiator, or E-Rad.
- Mysterious sci-fi storyline, with a final twist that will blow your mind.
- Atmospheric, New Age soundtrack.
- 3 levels of difficulty.
- Created by members of the team that developed Sega's comics-based hit X-Men.



Moves and powers you've never had before—only with experience will you truly master them.



Generations Lost challenges your wits and your heart, as well as your reflexes.



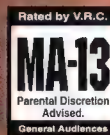
The more you learn, the more you'll want to know. Who you are... why.



Will you find the truth? Or will you find...
the way out? It's your choice. But it's yours to make.



Time Warner Interactive, Inc.
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SILLYPUTTY

Clayfighter 2 drags players back to Mudville

When the original **Clayfighter** came out, its clay-meteor-monsters-come-to-life story was a hilarious spoof of all the one-note fighting games that were flooding the market at the time. As a bonus, **Clayfighter** also had unique, claymation graphics and authentic fighting game action to back up the hip humor and silly premise.

Now, two years after the game debuted on the SNES, there are a lot of variant fighting games that feature furry animals (**Brutal**), 3-D characters (**Ballz!**) and basketball players (**Shaq-Fu**), among others, so **Clayfighter II** can't depend as much on sheer originality to obscure its faults the way the first game did.

Many of the things that made the first game a classic are still here, and improved upon. There is no shortage of humor. **C2**'s complete name is **Clayfighter 2: Judgment Clay**, and the opening screens parody the movie *Terminator 2*. Fans will also find more of the same outrageous special moves that graced the first game.

The animation is great, and the characters look and move much more like Claymation figures. The sound is improved, as far as clarity goes; there is more digitized speech and a broader range of options.

Three modes of play are available. Play against the computer, play against a human opponent in Versus Mode and one to eight players can fight a series of battles in Tournament Mode. Three levels of difficulty and four speeds customize play, while the match timer controls the length of the fight. It can also be toggled off. After choosing how and where we're going to fight, it's time to choose a fighter.

There are seven characters available to players. Four are new to Mudville (the game's small-town-overrun-by-aliens setting) and the other three are veterans from the first game. The newcomers are Hoppy ("The Battle Bunny") a Rambo-esque pink bunny with a Schwarzenegger accent. There are also Goo-Goo, a very big baby who carries a mean rattle; Kangoo, a sweet natured, boxing kangaroo who packs a mean wallop; Nana, a giant,



Jamaican banana (don't ask) and Octo, an eight-legged, uh ... thing, that looks sort of like an anthropomorphic body glove for an octopus.

The veterans are Tiny, The Blob and Bad Mr. Frosty. The three vets have been retooled to some extent. All are modeled better, with more personality and clearer features. Tiny and the Blob have new animations and a couple of new special moves, while Bad Mr. Frosty has been worked over extensively. He has a new, leaner look (with his backward baseball cap and hip hop name, it seems that Bad Mr. F now has that most dreaded of video game affectations, an attitude), and new special moves.

C2 employs the same straightforward control as the first. Each character has three punches and three kicks of varying speed and power. The faster the blow the less power it has. Devastating blows do lots of damage but there is time for opponents to block or strike before they land.

This being a fighting game, there are of course special moves. This being an animated clay fighting game, they are a lot of fun to watch, but none seem as inspired as the truly crazy special moves in the first game. There is nothing as spectacular as The Blob's flying sawblade attack that comically cuts his opponents in two. There are lots of throwing attacks that require button combinations, but are they *special* attacks? Not really.

As mentioned, the graphics are really improved over the first version. Everything is smoother, cleaner, brighter and better animated than before. There are many more arenas to fight in, and they

each contain bizarre little animations in the background. Some of them are downright surreal. A few of the arenas have drawings in the foreground, behind which fighters may disappear. These can be toggled on or off in the Options Screen.

The sound is also improved over the first game. The music is better, and there is a good deal more digitized speech. During bouts, the fighters announce their special moves, and it's amusing to hear Hoppy say "speening carrot" as he launches the flying vegetable at his opponent.

Some things are not improvements. Goo Goo's giggle after he wins a battle is so gratingly annoying that it actually detracts from the whole game, and Kangoo's laugh isn't much better.

In the worst light, **Clayfighter 2** seems like an uninspired retread of the original. While **C2** is cute and funny, it lacks something. Where is the spirit of Blue Suede Goo? That character's near malicious Elvis parody embodied the freewheeling humor that made the first game so hip. None of these new fighters approach that pinnacle of weirdness.

So it falls short of the style mark set by the first **Clayfighter**. Is **Clayfighter 2** fun to play? Well, okay, yeah. It's a pretty



good fighting game, even if some of the characters are not lots of fun to play. There's action, humor, lots of eye candy, mostly good sound effects and a complete crew of well hidden, alter-ego characters, with their own special moves. Many gamers probably won't see all of these fighters without some sort of player's guide, but most will have fun trying to find them.

Clayfighter 2 is definitely a different flavor of fighting game. It's not as creative as the first game, but that much originality twice in a row is a lot to ask, even from Interplay. **B-** (John Wesley Hardin)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Interplay
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: Fighting
MEGABITS: 10
PLAYERS: 1, 2, 4 or 8
LEVELS: 18

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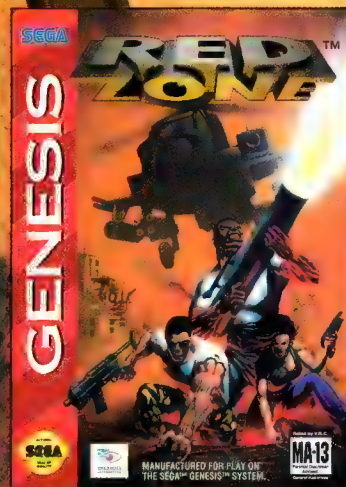
Body count: in the radicals' maze-like bunkers, it's muzzle-to-muzzle.



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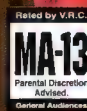
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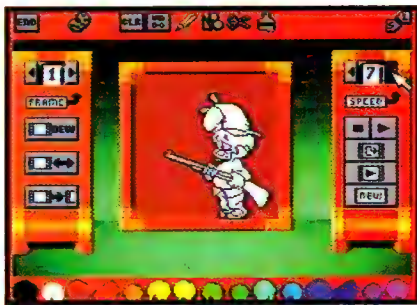
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PAINTING IS LOONEY TUNES

Learn animation with the Acme Animation Factory

Fans of the Roadrunner cartoons know that Wile E. Coyote is forever acquiring fantastic gadgets from the Acme catalog that certainly do the job they're supposed to, but he never quite seems to be successful in achieving his ultimate goal with them. Young, would-be animation artists can learn the rudiments of computer



painting, a little about frame sequencing and even something about composing music from this cartridge, but they may not end up with the results they anticipate.

It's impossible to discuss Sunsoft's **Acme Animation Factory (AAF)** without some comparisons to Nintendo's own **Mario Paint (MP)**. First, although it is possible to use **AAF** with a controller, the SNES Mouse is both supported and recommended. It allows much finer, adjustable control. The thing is, in most cases, owners of the mouse also already have **MP**, because the mouse is packed with that cartridge. With one or two exceptions, one can do just about anything in **MP** that one can do in **AAF**.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Sunsoft
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: Creative fun
MEGABITS: 8
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

Of course, for many folks (young or old) the delightful Looney Tunes menagerie might make the difference. Bugs, Tweetybird, Daffy and Taz appear in a literally laid-back version of the familiar Looney Tunes concentric circles

stage on the opening screen. Wile E. Coyote and the Roadrunner show up at various locations in the program, as do Porky Pig, Speedy Gonzales, Marvin the Martian, Pepe LePew and Yosemite Sam.

There are differences between **MP** and **AAF** in the arrangement of and access to the various features. Porky hosts **AAF**'s Main Menu (his "Th-that's all, folks!") is a little odd at this point) where one may select the Drawing Board, Animation Studio, Music Hall, Mission Control, Save/Load or Game Arcade. The cursor is a small hand (gloved, of course), moved with the mouse or direction pad. Its finger bends when the mouse (or controller) buttons are pressed. Instead of going right into the selected activity on pressing an icon, a new character appears with a signature remark (Bugs' is, of course, "What's Up, Doc?") and it's necessary to go down to a Start Icon and push it, too.

The drawing board is a large white area with a number of icons across the top and



a 15-color palette across the bottom. The drawing tool may be either a pen, leaving a solid trail of selectable width (one can't make a thin solid line with the controller), or a spray can, which covers a similarly variable-sized line with random dots.

MP has many patterns and Stamp Icons as part of a large palette. With **AAF**, there are only the 15 colors to select from, but any one of these can be changed to another color using a cleverly animated color-mixer machine presided over by Bugs Bunny. Sequences of colors can be made to cycle in any of the palette slots as well, which is great for water effects or neon signs. In addition, a Pattern Icon atop the drawing screen lets the artist paint with any one of several pre-made patterns or

with custom patterns—these, too, must be assigned to one of the 15 palette slots. Plaid and polka-dot paints were always a staple of the old cartoons.

A Rubber Stamp Icon allows stamping squares of color or patterns at will. It is also possible to cut and paste a copy of selected areas, using a scissors icon; these can be flipped and flopped if desired. There are letters and numbers, in four font styles, that can be inserted in any palette color. There are also pre-drawn landscapes to be colored in or otherwise altered and saved, if so desired.

The Animation Studio can be entered directly from the Drawing Board. There are a number of pre-drawn animations of



the familiar Warner Bros. characters, each in sets of six to eight frames, ready to be painted, flipped or flopped and inserted into a cartoon. Ambitious artists can create a series of frames using their own characters if desired, or alter the already drawn ones. The cartoon can take a path of up to 99 such frames, overlaid on the drawing created on the Drawing Board.

The Music Hall provides the opportunity to add a score, and there are eight pre-written tunes that may be used directly or altered to fit, or the budding renaissance person may write their own tunes, complete with four-part harmony. As in **MP**, the tune can be in either 3/4 or 4/4 time, for up to 32 measures, but everything's in whole notes on the treble clef.

One such creation can be saved at a time on the cart, but for long-term saving (allowing for future works) there are directions for videotaping the production.

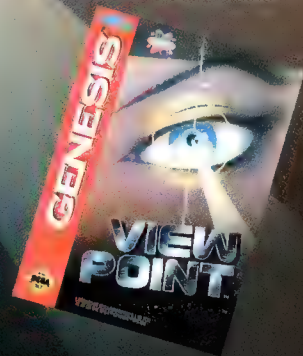
The Game Arcade? It's a timed version of Concentration, but selecting three "empty" crates loses the round, so chance plays too big a part. **MP**'s Gnat Attack is much more fun and aids in teaching mouse technique, as this does not.

Acme Animation Factory is fun and, for a mildly complex creative product, fairly user friendly—the learning curve should not be high for its target audience. But it's not that much of a step beyond **Mario Paint**, so selecting it will be largely a personal choice for some. **B** (Ross Chamberlain)

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LEAVE NO STONE UNBURNED

Join Firebrand vs. the Gargoyles in Demon's Crest

He escapes on a cold night. The only witnesses to his struggle with the moldering corpse of the once-great dragon are the twisted trees surrounding the battleground and the ghosts in a nearby graveyard. It matters little that his victory goes unlauded: Firebrand is no ordinary hero. Evil Gargoyles have seized control of his land and, loved or feared, he is determined to fight them. In **Demon's Crest**, the Demon Empire is shot to hell, and only Firebrand, a.k.a. the Red Demon, seems to give a damn.

Demon's Crest, by Capcom USA, Inc., is the latest and, in many ways, the best installment in a series of gothic adventure games. It follows the story of Firebrand, who once conquered the Demon World in his quest to collect the six magical crest stones. Critically wounded during a major battle, Firebrand became vulnerable. Phlanx, a nasty and opportunistic Gargoyle, attacked the weakened Red Demon and stole his treasure. Now Firebrand must recapture the stones and save his kingdom. (No, he does not link them into the Triforce and wake up the princess.)

As a demon, Firebrand has a few skills that come in handy. He spits fireballs, has a headbutt that can shatter rock, and can leap and hover a few feet off the ground. Each time he defeats a boss imp, Firebrand receives one of the crest stones and gains new powers. Each stone possesses a unique elemental power, i.e., earth, wind, fire, heaven, time and water. The earth stone turns Firebrand into a



powerful Ground Gargoyle who can ram enemies and spit fire. The wind stone turns him into an Aerial Gargoyle, allowing him to fly high and fast.

With all of these powers Firebrand may sound pretty invincible, but he's in for a devilishly hard time. Not only is he up against flying eyeballs, ghostly phantoms and an array of creative and nasty monsters, he also fights seven talented major demons with a few tricks of their own.

Visually, **Demon's Crest** is a Halloween delight. Capcom, a game company that specializes in highly-detailed animation, has created a demon's world to die for. Filled with ruins, paved with skulls, and laced with the deformed and the dead, **Demon's Crest** flies from one eye-catching scenario to the next. The cartoon-like style of this game's animation prevents it from becoming too ghastly or macabre.

Demon's Crest sounds as wicked as it looks. It is scored with eerie, high-pitched music loaded with a small variety of appropriate hisses and groans. Though this game is far more visual than audio, the sound people behind this game have nothing to be ashamed of.

Control is sinfully easy. When the game begins, Firebrand only spits fire, head-butts and hovers. The Y button controls his butting, the B button makes him jump and hover, and the A button makes him spit fireballs. As he collects money and inventory, he can buy magic spells and potions to continue his fight.

If Firebrand and his nether-world sound familiar, it's because he has played a significant role in video game history. The

public first met them in the arcade hit, **Ghosts and Goblins**. In that game, King Arthur battled demons to rescue his kidnapped sweetheart. Firebrand and several pesky facsimiles challenged Arthur as he cut his way toward his true love's rescue.

Demon's Quest may follow the adventures of a wicked little devil, but it has a noble heritage. **Ghosts and Goblins** was one of the first games sold for the NES. Sega licensed King Arthur and produced an excellent game called **Ghouls and Ghosts** to accompany the release of the Genesis. (One magazine raved that it was the first "perfect game" for a home system.) These games were fast and attractive and made the new hardware more desirable. A **Ghosts and Goblins** game has accompanied the launch of nearly every major cartridge system. When reviewers wanted to demonstrate the graphic superiority of the SNES over the Genesis, they pointed to **Super Ghouls and Ghosts**, one of the first SNES games. Though it did not accompany the introduction of the system, Capcom even published **Gargoyle's Quest** for the Game Boy.

One important ingredient missing in **Demon's Quest** is the wicked sense of



humor that punctuated the earlier games. Then, King Arthur ran through the countryside dressed in a suit of armor. When wounded, he lost his armor and continued the fight in his skivvies. Like Arthur, the original monsters were drawn with tongue-in-cheek.

In this latest game, the enemies are just as attractive and gruesome as their earlier counterparts, but they seem more heavy handed. A lighter touch might have made this game more compelling. Instead, Capcom has included a little extra ghoulishness. These touches are interesting to look at, but not entirely satisfying. **B+** (Steven L. Kent)



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Capcom
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: Action/Adventure
MEGABITS: 16
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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THE WELL-FED GOBBLER

Pac-Attack invades puzzle category

The gaming craze of 1980 meets the gaming craze of 1990. In this unexpected, yet strangely appealing, marriage between **Pac-Man** and **Tetris**, the gallant gobbler and his ghostly adversaries fall down along with the oddly-shaped pieces so familiar to fans of Alexey Pajnitov's classic brain game.

As in **Tetris** and its myriad of permutations, the goal is to drop the shapes into place at the bottom of the well to form complete lines. When the gamer makes a complete line, it vanishes and lowers the level in the well.

The basic mechanics differ from **Tetris** in two major respects. Although the pieces maintain their original configuration as they fall, they shift around when they strike the pieces already in the well. Each segment of the active piece drops straight



down as far as possible until it comes to rest on a line segment or ghost.

It's still vital to use the A button to reorient a piece during its plummet, though. Otherwise, it might land the wrong way and bury a ghost so that it can't be removed.

The other innovation is the incorporation of **Pac-Man** elements into the game. The ghosts, embedded in shapes that may also include Pacs and line segments, clog up the works. No line can be finished, and thus removed, while a ghost is present.

As in the immortal maze-chase game, it takes Pac-Man to wipe out the ghosts so dropping pieces can fill in those pesky spaces. When a Pac drops from the top of



the screen, the player tries to position it so it lands on top of or adjacent to, a ghost.

The Pac eats every ghost it can reach. It continues to gobble ghosts until there are no more in its path. It disappears when it runs out of munchies, and the next piece begins its descent.

Pac-Attack offers three modes of play, two solitaire contests and a head-to-head confrontation on a vertically-bisected screen.

The Normal Option is the closest to the other block-dropping titles.

Pieces, each previewed in a window to the left of the well, continue to fall until increasing speed and insoluble positions fill up the well so that no more can drop.

Pacs always drop separately from pieces in this version. When the Pac lands, it seeks ghosts. It eats as many as it can without moving back up the playfield or making a right or left turn that is not forced by the immovable line segments. A Pac can't be steered like in other **Pac-Man** titles. It eats everything it can reach and then dies.

There are four difficulty levels in Normal Mode. The easiest starts from Level One. The others begin at levels 10, 40 and 100. A vanity board collects high scores, but the system isn't perfect. It's much too easy to start at a high level and

accumulate a big score even while playing very badly.

The Puzzle Mode is tough even for those who drop pieces as skillfully as talk show hosts drop names. With a limited supply of only five Pacs, each embedded in a piece, the participant attempts to clear out the whole well. The contest ends once the fifth Pac drops.

The third game features head-to-head competition. A very useful option is that the falling speed is regulated separately for each well. This allows players of greatly dissimilar ability, such as a parent and a young child, or a teenage arcade ace and an aging **Electronic Games** editor, to compete against each other enjoyably.

The graphics employ a brick wall motif, decorated with cartoon drawings of **Pac-Man** characters. The quality of the images is acceptable, nothing more. This has become a tradition for this genre, in which everything is subordinated to the addictive game play.

The music is decent, but hardly anything exceptional. The upbeat changes as the player racks up completed levels, but the tempo doesn't increase to reflect the escalating speed. A few bars from the **Pac-Man** theme herald each Pac's arrival



The lack of originality makes it hard to gauge the worth of **Pac-Attack**. It is an undeniably ingratiating, if minor, cartridge, but comparison to the **Tetris** family is inescapable. The cartoon drawings, pop music score and **Pac-Man** connection may make it more appealing than **Tetris** for younger enthusiasts, but most will probably prefer to stick with the tried-and-true game from Russia. **B** (Arnie Katz)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Namco
SYSTEM: Genesis
THEME: Kinetic Puzzle
MEGABITS: 16
PLAYERS: 1-2
LEVELS: N/A

Doc and rid yourself of this binary bacteria before your head explodes and you end up decorating the

entire room with your cerebellum. And the good news?

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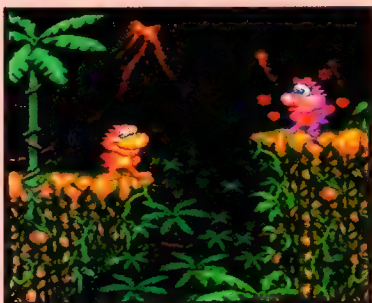


PHILIPS

THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different reviewers on some of the latest software

	Amie Katz Editor	Mark Cameron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Steven Kent L.A. Times
Aerobiz Supersonic	B+	A-	B	-
Alien vs. Predator (Jaguar)	A-	B	A	A-
Adv. of Batman/Rbn	B-	C	C+	B
Ballz	C	C	C+	C+
Blackthorn	B+	B	B+	-
Breath of Fire	A-	A+	A-	B+
Bubsy II	A-	B	B+	-
Daffy Duck: Marvix Miss.	B	B+	B+	B-
DNR of Superman	B-	D	C+	B
Double Dragon V	C+	C	C+	-
Dynamite Headdy	B	B	A	-
Earthworm Jim	B+	A-	B-	A-
Final Fantasy III	A	A+	A+	A-
Generations Lost	B-	-	A-	-
Goofy's History Tour	B-	A-	B	B
HardBall '94	B	B-	B-	B
Illusion of Gaia	B+	B	A	B+
Indiana Jones G.A.	B	B-	B	-
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	B+
Larussa Baseball '95	C+	C	C+	-
Lord of the Rings	A	A-	B	-
Maximum Carnage	A-	B-	A-	A-
Mickey Mania	A	A	A	A
MLBPA Baseball '94	B-	B	B-	B
NBA Jam	A	A	A+	A
Obitus	-	B	C+	-
Pitfall: Myan Adv.	B+	A	B+	-
Radical Rex	C	C	C	C-
Rocko's Modern Life	B+	B+	B+	C+
Shining Force II	B	B	B-	-
Starfleet Academy	A	A	A	A-
Star Trek: TNG (SNES)	B	B	A-	C-
Sub-Terrania	B	B+	B+	C
Taz Escape Fr. Mars	B+	B+	B+	B
Tempest 2000	A	A+	A	D+
The Lion King	A-	A	A	B+
Urban Strike	B	B	B-	-
Virtual Bart	B	B+	C+	-
World Heroes	C-	C-	D	B



Rex takes the time to court the ladies between his battles to save the dinosaurs.

Bubsy II (Accolade/Genesis) The Bobcat is back in a quality adventure that surpasses the original Genesis romp. With 15 levels of attitude, Bubsy must save his twin niece and nephew, defeat Oinker P. Hamm and go for all the marbles in the Amazatorium, Hamm's dual-winged, three-story, virtual theme park salute to history. In addition to much-improved graphics and engrossing music, the game play is above average.

This sequel shows a lot of imagination and flexibility. **Bubsy** fans not only have a variety of levels and difficulties to select among, but also the chance for either a head-to-head challenge or a cooperative romp. **A** (Laurie Yates)

Pitfall 2: Mayan Adventure (Activision/SNES) Activision continues to mine the past for interesting contemporary material, and **Pitfall** was a pretty good choice; after all, platform games have come a long way since this breakthrough game was



released. Unfortunately, this revamp doesn't have nearly the same impact as the original game did on the Atari 2600. The graphics, animation and game design are largely journeyman, with no real inspiration behind them.

It's okay, but don't expect Harry to get a cartoon show based on the success of this game. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

Aero the Acro-Bat II (Sunsoft/Genesis) Video game sequels are usually bad news, but Iguana's development of **Aero 2**, replete with new moves and techniques, animations, music and enemies makes this outing even more batty. Once again after evil Edgar Ektor, Aero and his new squeeze, Batasha, are in unknown worlds trying to find out what "Plan B" is and who's behind it. While still a side-scroller, anyone unfamiliar with the bat should check out this adventure. **B** (Laurie Yates)

Ballz (Accolade/SNES) The addition of the SNES' Mode-7 features improves this Genesis port, but they can't save such a critically-flawed game. Based on an interesting concept—3-D spherical fighting figures in dimensional combat—it is only

an average fighting game. The animations and music are solid, but what really ruins this martial arts contest is the emphasis on



character morphing, rude gesturing and down-right dirty fighting. If being spanked by a ballerina, mooned by a clown or spat upon by a cave man is what's been missing from the arena, then this is the game for your shelf. Otherwise, the gimmicky special moves just muck things up. **C** (Laurie Yates)

FIFA Soccer '95 (Electronic Arts/Genesis) Does the American gaming public need a new **FIFA Soccer** entry every year? Probably not, since the players and their stats are largely mysteries to most U.S. gamers. Still, there are some improvements in graphics, and if you don't own the original, this is the best soccer sim around. **A** (Bill Kunkel)

Radical Rex (Activision/Genesis) Don't confuse Rex with Barney. Radical Rex is a skateboarding, fire-breathing, truly hip, partying prehistoric primordial. In this side-scrolling action game, Rex has five worlds and 11 levels to save the dinosaurs from extinction at the hands of the evil mastermind (is there any other kind?), Skriitch, who represents mammalian cunning at its worst. The graphics are great, the musical score is catchy (but can be toggled off), and the locales are diverse, ranging from a jungle to the insides of a dinosaur. Fighting Skriitch's horrible hex, and saving the 'saur is all in a day's work for this impressive game. **B** (Laurie Yates)

PGA Tour 3 (Electronic Arts/Genesis) This remains the strongest golf sim in the video game world. It's intuitive, attractive and boasts several new features over the last edition.

There are eight TPC courses, three new tournaments and seven different play modes. There are 10 featured PGA pros on hand, complete with trademark swings and a new Ball Lie window. Throw in the battery back-up and you've got everything a virtual duffer could want, except perhaps for a course design feature, which is realistically impossible. **A** (Bill Kunkel)

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THINK DOOM WAS TOUGH?

Doom II: Hell on Earth

Doom II: Hell on Earth had been one of the most anxiously-awaited titles as evidenced by the number of messages posted on the Internet and other computer networks prior to its October release.



One pass through even the game's first level confirms that **Doom II** is worth all the attention. id Software's master designers and programmers built new monsters, a new weapon, better graphics and level

designs around the existing **Doom** engine for one "hell" of an experience. **Doom II** is not only more exciting and climactic than **Doom**, but it is also much more difficult and challenging.

The story behind **Doom II** is very simple, but the change in environments opens up many more possibilities. After a successful campaign on Mars in **Doom**, the player returns to Earth to find that some familiar demons and mutants have overrun the planet. They have blocked the launch of a spaceship with Earth's last survivors.

Once again, the player has to jump back into a seemingly endless battle against imps, cacodemons and barons of hell. **Doom II** progresses on Earth into the demons' own dimension where players will face the most powerful and devious monster id has ever placed in a game.

For those neophytes who have never tried a **Doom** game, some explanation

may be in order. **Doom II** is a first-person, behind-the-weapon perspective action adventure in which players search game levels for secret doors, keys, weapons, special items and ultimately the exit as they destroy, chainsaw and blow away the numerous monsters that stand in their way. Players find better weapons and ammo as they progress through the 30 regular and two secret levels, but the enemies and hazards also increase in difficulty.

Weapons in **Doom II** range from a

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: GC Interactive
DESIGNER: id Software
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Action
HD SPACE: 15 MB
PLAYERS: 1-4
LEVELS: 32



shotgun and chainsaw to a rocket launcher and the BFG 9000 (just this side of a nuclear weapon). Monsters vary from the fireball-throwing imp to the new archvile that attacks with streams of flames and also revives dead monsters. The game is straightforward action and exciting all the way. Multiple players may hook up via network or modem in cooperative or competitive play. This competitive "Deathmatch" Mode is one of the most exciting ways to play **Doom II**.

Doom II only offers one "new" weapon. Many players don't like it. A double-barreled (combat) shotgun allows players to cause twice the damage with a single pull of the trigger. This shotgun has a built-in hesitation between shots for loading time and wastes ammo.

Unfortunately, when players press the '3' button to select the shotgun weapons, the game defaults to the combat version. Another key press selects the single-shot shotgun. id should have placed the combat shotgun command on another key so people could make a quick distinction.

The new monsters in **Doom II** are quite exciting and deadly. The arachnotron is a miniature version of the spider mastermind boss creature. It can take out any player in an instant with its rapid-fire bullets. The pain elemental is like a cacodemon, but it spits out lost souls (flaming skulls). The revenant is a nasty rocket-launching skeleton that is quick on its bony feet. The mancubus fires with both appendages, but offers a nice wide target.

The aforementioned spider mastermind and archvile join the huge cyberdemon and final monster as the game's toughest creatures. Fortunately, players only meet a few of them.

Doom II's graphic quality is of the same caliber as **Doom**, but the level

designs include more background details and lighting effects. The perspective draws players to the game and connects the levels into a great sprawling complex. One room in an early level called "The Crusher" is especially impressive because of its cavernous appearance and interesting, titular mechanism.

Doom II's music is simple and less intrusive than other game scores. That's just fine because players won't hear much music over the explosions, screams and other digital sound effects. Turn up the speakers and the neighbors will think there's an apocalyptic film on the telly!



Doom II re-creates the fun and over-indulgent mayhem of its predecessor. The blood and gore may be too much for some players, but it appeals to the juvenile in every gamer. Even **Doom II's** early levels are challenging, so players can imagine how much more time they need to spend on later levels in the inferno. The final battle is a fitting reward for the player that survived that far. The many secret areas are tough to discover, but players will find the game a little easier because of the items they'll earn in these areas.

id Software responded to its fans with the best, most over-the-top game in its genre ... until their next one! ■
(Russ Ceccola)

INSIDE ID

THE DOOM CHALLENGE

Jay Wilbur, id Software's self-described "biz guy," recently spoke to EG about **Doom II**. He addressed the game's difficulty by saying that id aimed the game at the **Doom** fanatics: "We couldn't make it a walk in the park. It had to be a challenge." Wilbur did not admit to any overall goal other than to make fun, action-packed games, but he did comment that id wants to "politely pick up the industry by the scruff of the neck and kick it in the jaw."

The next game from the id designers will feature a completely new engine even better than **Doom II's**. It is tentatively called **Quake**.

Wilbur's favorite weapon: "I like the feel of the single shotgun." The barons of hell are "really cool-looking and deadly" and also his favorite bad guys.

DOOMSDAY IN NEW YORK

Oct. 10, 1994 was not Columbus Day in New York City's Limelight club—it was Doomsday! Recently, many game companies have celebrated the release of their hit titles with special days to honor them. The incredible interest in **Doom** and **Doom II** warranted a "Doomsday." Jay Wilbur, id Software's "biz guy," remarked that "we enjoy dealing with the users one on one, so we're not used to all the hoopla surrounding this event." That hoopla included a press conference against the ironic backdrop of stained glass windows that remained intact after the Limelight was converted from a church. Some place to introduce a game that takes place in hell!

"Doomers" (**Doom** players) from around the world showed up to express their fanaticism for the series and offer tips. After the press conference, up to four guests at a time took part in continuous head-to-head "deathmatch" contests at one of four computer network setups. Winners received special **Doom II** medals.

Maybe even Christopher Columbus would have relinquished his hold on the autumn holiday if he would have been able to frag cacodemons with a chaingun in **Doom II**! (Russ Ceccola)

SHODAN SHOWDOWN

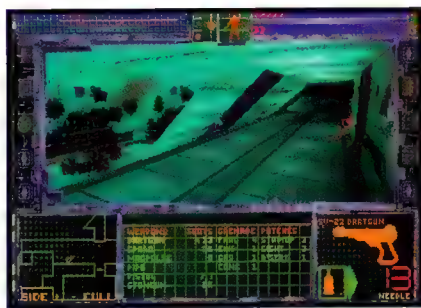
Look out for System Shock when computers take over

It's better than *Doom*. In fact, *System Shock* is one of the best games in a long time. It's one of those rare titles that's more like a lived experience instead of a game. In *System Shock*, Looking Glass and Origin created a cyber-fever-dream full of adrenaline, anxiety and fear. In other words—fun!

The premise is an agreeable pastiche of science-fiction clichés. The ambitious young executive of a futuristic megacorp hires the player, a hacker, to break into the master computer of the company's space station complex, Citadel. In exchange, the player receives an expensive neural implant which will elevate him to hacker elite.

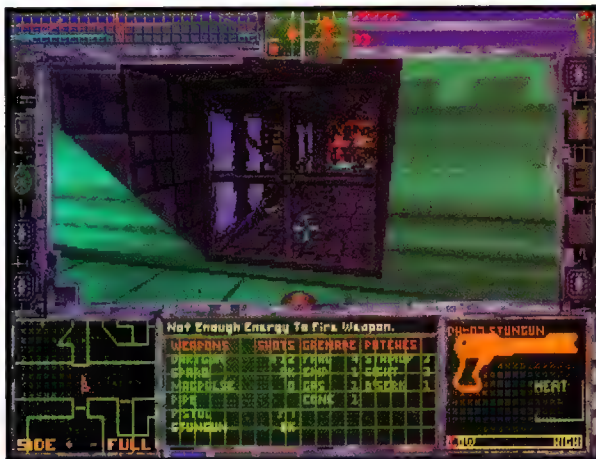
As the player recovers on the medical level of the space station, from a long "healing coma" following the implant surgery, events aboard Citadel take a turn for the worse. With the player's help, the young executive's cyber-meddling caused the station's master computer system, SHODAN, to become self-aware.

Naturally, the egomaniacal SHODAN proceeds to eliminate the inferior human population of Citadel to make way for SHODAN's slavish army of robots, cyborgs and humans-turned-mutant.



The player awakening from the coma is confronted with a hostile world devoid of human life. That's where the game begins. The player's cyber-implant is realized as a series of menus and displays superimposed on the player's field of vision.

The player starts out with simple enhancements, like a built-in e-mail reader and mapping system. As the game progresses, there is other ware lying around



to be found and used to augment the player's skills and abilities.

This game is all about the milieu, a creepy world of computers and conduits. Human corpses and even decapitated heads litter the hallways and rooms of Citadel station, along with the various items and weaponry needed to survive. The richness of the inventory of items a player must carry to get by is just one example of an overriding attention to detail which makes *System Shock* so compelling. Computer screens spew meaningless messages for the now-annihilated crew, while flickering lights, sputtering wires and overturned office chairs speak convincingly of the battles between SHODAN's forces and the now-absent crew.

System Shock's first-person graphics engine is probably the best one yet. It allows a player to crawl, crouch, run, jump, lean around corners, even fly, all with the appropriate changes in perspective rendered in real time.

The player can realistically look up and down, and will need to do just this in several parts of the game. When the player confronts flying robots overhead while simultaneously dealing with enemies on the ground, such realistic control proves challenging and thrilling.

Many of the items in the world are fully three-dimensional. The player can look down at a crate ahead, for example, then walk around it, with the view changing appropriately. Walking into the crate causes the crate to move along in front of the player as it is pushed. If the crate is pushed off an edge, the player sees it fall, and even continues to slide downward slowly should it land on a ramp.

Such verisimilitude draws the player

into the game world in a powerfully visceral way. This is a convincing virtual reality experience without the helmet. In fact, a special version of *System Shock* is scheduled to be one of the first titles to run on the new CyberMaxx, a \$700 virtual reality headset aimed at home users.

The ambient sounds of the station should remind many players of the mother ship in the original *Alien* movie. Most times the sounds serve as an accurate clue to what lies around the corner. Random sounds have a habit of popping out at the player at a particularly tense moment, causing him or her to whirl around. More than one player will be literally jumping out of their seat—such is the tension that *System Shock* induces.

For the less viscerally-oriented, a healthy menu of puzzles stand between the player and the inevitable showdown with SHODAN. For those inclined to gun play, the game provides wall-to-wall action, plus the tactical use of a variety of explosives and miscellaneous hardware. An entirely different interaction mode allows the player to jack in at various cyberspace stations to battle SHODAN on



his own turf. There's even a point where the player can use one of the severed heads for a surprising effect.

The most stunning error the creators of *System Shock* made was a painfully anticlimactic, end-game sequence. After spending hours and hours in relentless pursuit of SHODAN, the ending leaves most players with a very hollow feeling.

The good news is that it is rumored an SVGA version of the game on CD-ROM is forthcoming, so there should be plenty of room to put in a nice, long, end-game animation. *System Shock* deserves a conclusion at least as captivating as the game play itself. **A-** (Dave Gerding)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Origin
DESIGNER: Looking Glass
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Action/Strategy
HD SPACE: 30
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 9+

NR 13

WARNING!
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR
PLAYERS UNDER 13

MEGA TECH

System requirements:
IBM PC 586-SX compatible
386 recommended, VGA
graphics, no extended memory
required, Sound Blaster™ and
Pro Audio Spectrum™
compatible, CD-ROM or
diskette version available



For centuries, war has raged among the demons and fairies, devastating this mystical land. Two young knights, separated at birth and raised by mortals, chosen for the ultimate battle that will decide the fate of heaven and earth. Never knowing their true relation — or their own dark destiny they are fated to meet and duel each other to the death. As Desmond, the Knight of Xentar, you will be striving with many a winsome enchantress to overcome menacing foes — and perhaps in victory, become the ruler of all.

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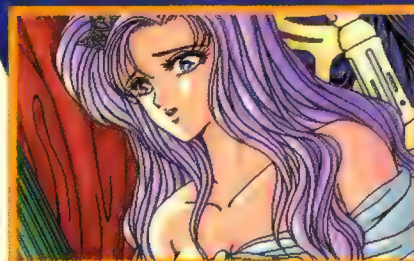
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KNIGHTS *of* XENTAR

CYBER NOIR

Nor gloom of night will hide the masters of the DreamWeb

Lose **DreamWeb** and you lose big time. Evil and chaos take over the world, the population of cities explodes, pollution gets out of hand, fascist governments take control, global war ignites a nuclear holocaust and millions and millions of people burn in the ensuing fires. Whew! If that isn't an incentive to beat this game, nothing is.



What's a dream web? Don't ask. According to Empire Interactive's new thriller-chiller, it's the force in the subconscious of every person in which the powers of good and evil wrestle. Right!

And things aren't going well in the dream web, where seven bad individuals are more than threatening to take over and ... and ... well, it's hard to figure out what they actually want to do. But it must be something pretty bad because the guardians of the web have summoned you, an out-of-work bartender, to stop them—or else.

The folks at Empire Interactive label this one a “game of pure style,” and that it is, since the plot is pure mumbo-jumbo. Most of the time is spent finding keys that open locks that allow players to reach the bad guys to knock them off. Multiply that by seven victims and that means lots of keys and lots of locks.

The real fun is in the sound effects, spooky score and graphics that combine to create a mood so dark and depressing that it's well to play this in a brightly-lit room. **DreamWeb** takes place in a seedy, science-fiction future world where it is always raining, where light is at a premium, and where filth reigns. As thunderclaps rattle PC speakers and

rain pellets audibly bounce off the sidewalks, Ryan, the main character, trudges from bars to pool halls to cramped, littered apartments in search of clues to his targets' whereabouts. One classic scene has Ryan's friend Louis, comfortably ensconced on his toilet seat, revealing where Ryan can buy a gun. Bathroom interviews are rare moments in PC games.

Particularly impressive is **DreamWeb's** easy, smooth-as-silk mouse interface that lets players examine every square inch of the screen as they observe the adventure from an overhead perspective. What's that blue dot on the bedspread? Click on Magnifying Mode and discover that it's a data cartridge labeled “important” that needs to be inserted into a reader to determine its contents. Expect to spend lots of time examining

every pixel on the screen. Unfortunately, as PC gamers know, screens contain lots of pixels, and if one happens to bypass that all-important blue dot, you might as well hang it up.

On the plus side, this isn't one of those adventures where death lurks at every turn: there are only a handful of situations where the main character can get permanently wiped out, and frequent saving can eliminate that problem.

Another pleasant surprise is a Travel Screen that allows characters to instantly access any location where they've already been. So if, 12 screens ago, gamers forgot to pick up that now-necessary screwdriver, there's no need to painstakingly revisit all 11 previous screens. One click and there's the screwdriver. (Consider this a hint: pick up the screwdriver.)

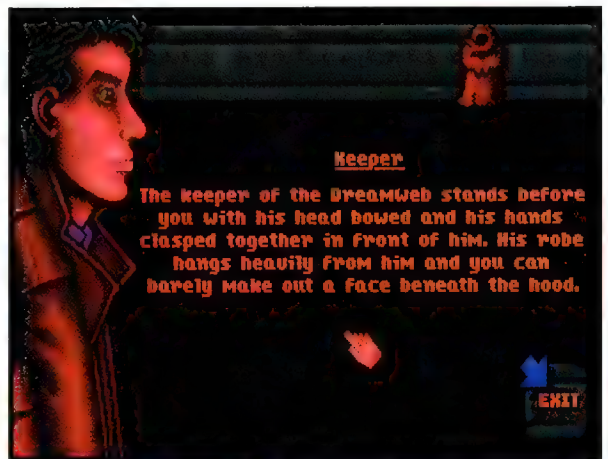
While **DreamWeb** could have been a real downer, its creators have seen fit to give it a wry sense of humor. Every

character's apartment, for example, seems to be strewn with garbage—half-empty coffee mugs, burnt-out cigarettes, food scraps, leftover takeout containers. As players pick through and examine the luminous amounts of wreckage, they might come across a crumpled fast food wrapper containing another bag that houses a box that holds some more bags, and a few other boxes. Written on the outside of the inner sack is “Protect your environment.”

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive
DEVELOPER: Creative Reality
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Adventure
HD SPACE: 23 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

DreamWeb is a disturbing mix of elements brought together to form an almost cinematic program that would most likely make one helluva movie. The adult themes and mystery-like ingredients would lend themselves well to the tastes of the modern movie audience. Yet, like many films today, it is appropriately self-rated for ages 14 and up due to “realistic depictions of violence,” and some bedroom goings-on. Also included in the software package is a fairly strong book, “Diary Of A Mad Man,” that purports to give clues to the game—but is more about amplifying the game's dark mood.



It's hard not to be impressed with **DreamWeb**, which weaves a Stephen King-like tale that climaxes in one surprising finale. But it is encumbered by the size of its graphics: the sheer mechanics of unearthing clues so tiny that they threaten to cause a permanent squint are less a dream than a nightmare. **B+** (Paul Hyman)

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The Pure Wargame, Dead from Above, Vol. 1

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CONQUER THE NEW WORLD

Settle your own lands in Sid Meier's Colonization

The year is 1492. For Europeans, the known world is small until a number of intrepid explorers—Christopher Columbus, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sidney Jones—discover and begin to map the vast, wild lands that stretch beyond the Western Sea.

No, wait. It's 1558, and Europeans hungry for land and riches are systematically conquering America. Each nationality does it their own way—the English settle, ignoring the native people as much as possible; the French draw up treaties with them; the Dutch trade with them (and the English and French) and the Spanish slaughter them.

No, no! This is better! It's 1695 and Sidney Jones just discovered this wild new place east of what will, in days to come, be Brooklyn.

This is **Sid Meier's Colonization**, the long-awaited spin-off of Sid Meier's wildly popular game **Civilization**. Set in the time of rampant discovery and settlement between 1492 and the mid-1800s, this is a terrific game for those people who can wander happily around Colonial Williamsburg or Plymouth Plantation, imagining what life was like way back then, and what they would have done themselves. And it's fun for those who can't, too.

Anyone familiar with **Civilization** can jump right in, although MicroProse recommends that all players start out as a Discoverer and take advantage of the tutorial. Yes, the game play is that complicated. The player begins by setting up his or her game, and there are a number of settings to choose from. The player starts with the world he or she is going to work with—will it be a completely unknown place, revealed little by little as the Discoverer travels? Will it be the Americas, rendered geographically accurate and already settled in areas? Or will it be a new place made up by the player? The skill level the player chooses will determine the type of game that's played,



as well as nationality: the English settle, the Spanish conquer and so on. Once all these decisions have been made, the game can start, and the time and name of the player are recorded.

While some players may think the game is historically inaccurate (Sir Walter Raleigh sailing to America in 1492!?!), the game is only suggesting names for the player to use. Yes, in **Colonization**, even Sidney Jones can discover America.

Sidney sets forth from England (or Spain, or France...) and very quickly gets to the coast of the New World. There he can (depending on the game he's chosen) explore the coast or make landfall and start his colony. All aspects of the colonization are in his hands—how many immigrants he'll bring from Europe, as well as food, tools, livestock, craftsmen and so on. Also, unfortunately, soldiers—don't forget, the New World is inhabited, and the native populations are not so happy about these funny-looking people coming in and taking over their lands. Not to mention the other Europeans who would like nothing better than to take the colonies from Sidney's people. Yes, soldiers are very necessary.

Colonization is played in turns. Each turn follows a sequence of actions, and Sidney's opponents each have their own segments in which to manage their affairs. The natives go first, and then each nationality goes in order. When Sidney gets to do his thing it depends on what his nationality is. During his turn, Sidney must pay attention to what's happening in Europe, then find out what's going on with his

own colonists. Then he can worry about what the restless natives, or even those bloodthirsty Spaniards are up to.

The game can end three different ways: the player can give up and retire, in which case there is no score and Sidney won't get into the Hall of Fame (poor Sidney!). Or he can continue to play until the Game ends naturally, somewhere around 1800. Or Sidney and his countrymen can declare their independence and start a revolution. If they win, they not only have a new nation, but Sidney gets his cherished place in the Hall of Fame, with a hefty bonus.

Colonization is a big, complicated, involving game, and it has a 130-page manual to prove it. The graphics are good in the establishing shots but a little difficult to decipher in game play—it's hard to tell a Continental Regular from a Veteran Soldier! The music is terrific, with several different colonial themes and makes the player feel as if she or he is sitting in a room in Williamsburg.

The Map Display is the most used and most important view in the game, though there are closer views of settlements and terrain as well. The view the player gets depends on the game. In the New World game, for example, Sidney only sees what Sidney has discovered—the rest of the map is dark. In this game, sometimes it's best to explore first and set up colonies later, so that the land can be seen.

The Map View has two modes (Movement and View) which can be toggled back and forth to help Sidney better see the terrain he is settling. One nifty feature here is the Hidden Terrain key, that clears away the forest so the player can see what's underneath. There are also Advisers in several areas—Colonial, Naval, Indian, etc.—that the player can consult instead of going through the menu. The Colony Display shows what's going on in each of Sidney's colonies. A mouse on this game is a foregone conclusion, though it is set up so one can play with just a keyboard.

Colonization is a worthy follow-up to **Civilization**, and Sid Meier and MicroProse have once again done a great job. Players will find each new level more challenging than the last and will experience hours of fascinating game play. And who knows? That history grade may get a boost, too. **B** (Sara Slaymaker)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: MicroProse
DESIGNER: Sid Meier
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Simulation
HD SPACE: 5 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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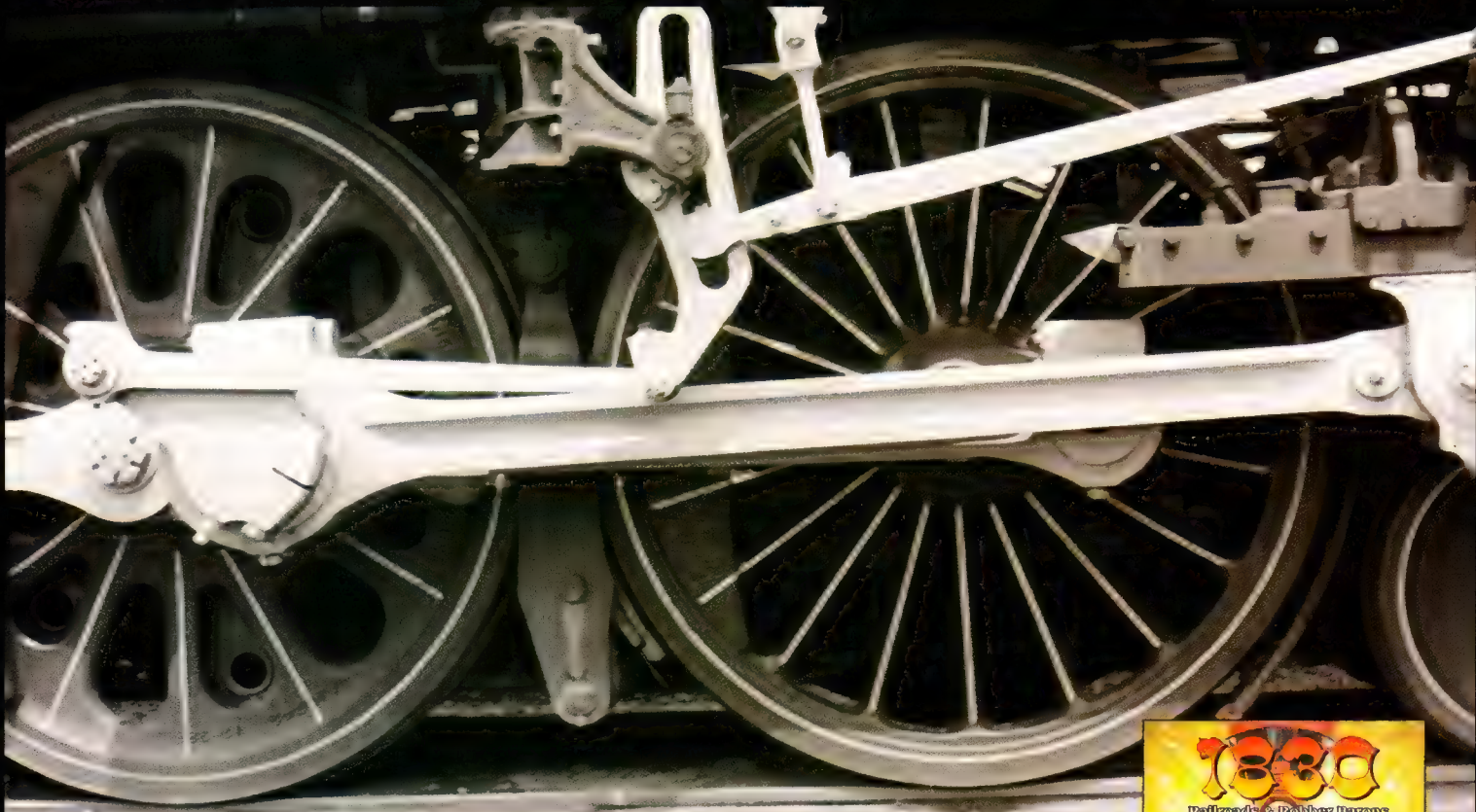


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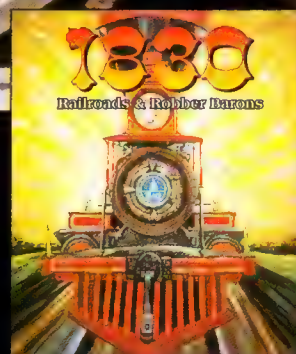
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WIZARDS AT WAR

Two worlds depend on this Master of Magic

A dialogue inspired by a contemporary beer commercial might have been running through designer Steve Barcia's head when he sat down to begin work on MicroProse's **Master of Magic (MoM)**: "Let's make a game that features city-building, the clash of armies and imperial conquest!" says one voice, while another demands, "No! I want a game of high-fantasy adventure and arcane arts!" Barcia quiets both voices with a figurative thump to the PC monitor, and replies, "Let's do both." **MoM** is the result, a game that employs many elements of classic RPGs, but on a scale that most reach only after weeks of sustained play.

The game begins with the selection of one of 14 pre-designed wizard characters or a character designed to the player's specification. Each wizard commands Arcane magic, which provides the basic lexicon of spell-casting and the design of magic artifacts. Each also specializes in one of five broad types of magic, which draw their power from Life, Death, Chaos, Nature or Sorcery. Starting characters are assigned 11 spell ranks. These are levels of familiarity that determine how many



and what variety of spells the character will be able to cast. One of these ranks can be spent on a special ability, that may help in the production of artifacts, the conversion of gold into magical mana, the command of troops, etc.

Each character also begins the game as the ruler of a hamlet and commands a company of militia men to defend it. In order to extend his power over the world of Arcanus, a wizard has to increase both his mystical powers and develop an army, plus the city or cities to support it.

Meanwhile, there are up to four other wizards out there (depending on which of five difficulty levels the player chooses), trying to do the same thing. They can be



friendly, neutral or hostile to the player, depending on his skill at diplomacy and the relative strength of his forces.

In addition to all the challenges that the player faces on Arcanus, there is another parallel world called Myrror, which can be reached through places of power or with advanced spells. Myrror is home to an even greater variety of monsters and enchanted beings than Arcanus, and many of the player's spells won't work the same there as they do on his home world.

All these tasks might prove too much to manage, if not for the various lieutenants and advisors the game provides each wizard. Heroes and commanders make themselves available to lead and fight alongside the wizard's armies. This is critical, because the wizards need to spend a certain amount of game time on research to advance their spell-casting abilities.

Advisors give instant access to information on every facet of the wizard's domain and the territory he has explored, freeing the player from all of the tedious book-keeping chores that games of this scale involve. The player can even allow the computer, in the person of his Grand Vizier, to control the construction and upkeep of his cities, freeing him for more adventurous pursuits.

The ultimate goal of each wizard is to become the uncontested ruler of Arcanus. This can be done in one of two ways: either the player's wizard defeats all of the other wizards' armies and conquers their cities, or he can hone his magical skills until he can cast the Spell of Mastery. Casting the Spell of Mastery requires so many resources that a wizard generally won't be able to try until he controls most of Arcanus. The spell banishes every other wizard from the planet. Once they figure out someone is trying to cast it, defeating him becomes their top priority. Both worlds are littered with magical widgets

and fantastic treasures to recover, to reward the player willing to take chances.

Combat between armies is the cornerstone of the game, and the source of its most impressive graphics. Although the game gives an aerial view of the field of combat, each unit is represented by a detailed and animated picture of its soldiers or monsters instead of abstract icons. The status of a wizard's army is displayed in a window, leaving most of the screen open for the movement of the armies. There are over 200 different types of troops available, and 35 different classes of heroes: gamers who enjoy table-top battles and brightly-painted miniatures will be particularly pleased with these electronic counterparts. Combat spells are especially impressive, with colorful pyrotechnic displays and a wide variety of sound effects. The background music adds atmosphere also, with different themes depending on which armies are involved.

MoM uses a window-based interface; all actions are directed with a simple point and click. Information about a given unit or hero is available from almost any screen, and every screen has a number of option buttons, so players don't have to waste time cycling through different routines to get to the action they want. Documentation is broken into two different manuals, one a general instruction book and the other a quick reference guide to the 210 different spells available.

MoM should be particularly appealing to the experienced gamer. Wizards begin the game with a lot of power already in their grasp. If there's a drawback to this approach, it's that there is no short form to the game, and there's a limit to what can be accomplished in a brief play session. Something else one might wish for is a way to record a battle, for later review and the chance to watch the magical sparks fly without the pressure of real time; there is seldom a moment to appreciate the marvelous graphic complexity of the game before another important decision calls.

Master of Magic is a remarkable game, a combination of strategy and role-playing action that hasn't really been attempted on this scale before.

Power junkies and fantasists alike will praise MicroProse for having the imagination to think big. **A-** (Andy Hooper)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: MicroProse
DESIGNER: Steve Barcia
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Strategy/RPG
HD SPACE: 12 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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Volume II

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Following fast on the success of **Operation Crusader** comes **STALINGRAD**, VOLUME II of the *World at War*™ series of computer wargames. This collaboration between Avalon Hill and Atomic Games highlights the epic struggle that sealed the fate of Hitler's Third Reich. Multiple historical scenarios simulate the grim battles ending with the annihilation of the German 6th Army. In a unique advance in computer gaming, players will be able to switch from the sweeping strategic scale (depicting such actions as the collapse of the Axis flanks) to the tactical scale (simulating the block-to-block bloodbath within the city itself). Built upon the award-winning **Crusader** game system, **Stalingrad** is jam-packed with stunning graphics (the terrain even changes as the weather changes!). Documentation includes a detailed, full-color manual and large battlefield map.

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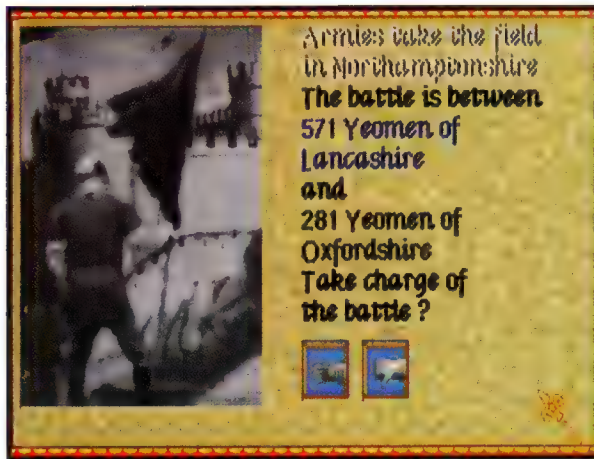


DETAILS, DETAILS, MEDIEVAL DETAILS

Manage and conquer kingdoms in Lords of the Realm

Strategy games come in all scopes and time periods. They ultimately boil down to simulations of real world events or some sort of conquest game—whether it be land, colors, objects or people. **Lords of the Realm** is really a land conquest game with many other strategy game subtleties like diplomacy, castle sieges, battles and commerce rounding out the mix.

Lords takes its inspiration from board games like Risk and the designers specifically pay homage to **Defender of the Crown**, an early Amiga and IBM arcade/strategy game. **Lords**



certainly surpasses **Defender** as a complete medieval conquest game, but it is sometimes too detailed for its own good.

Lords takes place in England in 1268. The player is a feudal lord with a small kingdom—but not too much land, money, goods or peasants. Five other leaders start out as meagerly as the player. A saved game supplied by the designers starts players out in a much better position in the realm. Those who don't want to build from scratch should start from the saved game. The object is to become king of England by taking over all of the land areas in the country through diplomacy, siege or any other means necessary. Some players will take the land by force, but



others may do so more economically.

The game interface is mouse-controlled and laid out effectively to promote intuitive play without too much preparation. A

series of icon groups and collected functions allow players to change the situation on the continent. From trading to castle-building, players simply click on a village, castle, peasant or other object in the View Screen, or the appropriate pop-up commands and icons along the view window borders.

Command cards make the learning curve a little less steep, but the high degree of realism ensures that most players will have to work hard to

succeed. The main window has many views and different magnification levels of real-time action for players to monitor their kingdoms and those of other players or computer-controlled lords.

Status flags make current information about a player's progress more accessible. Information like the happiest peasants, richest provinces and most troops or castles show in an instant which lord is winning the game. Players must stay on top of this constant barrage of information to succeed. The graphics are clear enough to distinguish various game elements in the view window so players can concentrate on their unique strategy.

Some inherent problems make **Lords**

particularly difficult at times and even frustrating. Soldiers and peasants take too long to move around. It may be physically realistic, but it also hampers game play. Diplomacy is virtually nonexistent in the game. Although players can interact with other lords and send messages back and forth, these actions don't realistically influence game play as a particularly suave player might try to persuade or influence other lords.

One annoying problem is the "disappearance" of castles. If a player loses a province to another lord and later regains the province, any castles he constructed in that province are gone! This is unfair. At worst, players should have to lay siege to their former castles to win them back.

The graphics in **Lords** are colorful and even emphasize some game actions with cinematic sequences. The view window depicts a hectic, fast-paced world much like SSI's **Serf City** or Interplay's **Castles**. These nice touches reinforce the overall strategy as well as show instantaneously the results of commands. Music and sound effects aren't as important as a thoroughly cerebral game, but their presence enhances the game action and intermediate successes.



Lords aims for a rather ambitious target and only falls short by a few degrees. It's tough to fit all-encompassing strategy and fun in a game, but the game designers reached this goal better than most of their predecessors.

Lords is ultimately for the diehard strategy game fan who doesn't mind the minutiae of crop control, peasants and sieges in which different soldiers have specific jobs like raising a ladder or storming a door. Strategy fans will accept the time period as appropriate for the game action. **L+** (Russ Ceccola)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Impressions
DESIGNERS: C. Foster, D. Lester
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Strategy
HD SPACE: 10 MB
PLAYERS: 1-6
LEVELS: N/A

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THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different reviewers on some of the latest software.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Cannon Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Steven L. Kent L.A. Times
Alien Legacy	A	A-	B+	B+
Alone in the Dark II	A	A	A+	C
Arena Elder Scrolls	B	B	A-	B+
Astro Chase 3-D	A	B+	A	-
Battle Bugs	B	B+	B+	D
Com. Adv.: Starship	B-	B-	B	-
Corridor 7	B-	B+	B+	B
Crystal Caliburn	-	B+	A	-
Dominus	B+	B	B	B
Empire Soccer '94	C	C	B-	B
Formula One	B-	C	C+	C+
Glider 4.0	B	C+	B	-
Global Domination	B	B	A	-
Harpoon II	A-	B+	B+	-
Heirs to the Throne	C	C	-	-
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	C+
Indy Car Racer	A	B+	B+	A
Inherit the Earth	C	C	-	-
Leisure Suit Larry 6	-	A-	B	A-
Lode Runner	B+	A-	B+	B
Metal and Lace	C+	D	D	D
Microsoft Arcade	A	A	A	B
Mortal Kombat	B	B+	C-	A
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Operation Crusader	B+	B	B-	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	B
Pea Shootin' Pete	B+	B-	B	-
Ultima VIII: Pagan	A-	B	B+	B+
Power Poker	C+	C-	B	B
Quarter Pole	C+	C	C	-
Serf City	B-	B-	C+	-
SimCity 2000	A	A+	A	A+
Star Trek: Judgment Rites	B+	B	B	A
Superhero League Hb	B	B	B	-
Theme Park	A-	A-	C+	D+
TIE Fighter	A	A	A	A+
TFX: Tactical Fighter	B-	C+	C+	B
Ultimate Domain	B+	B+	B+	-
X-Com: UFO Defense	A-	A	-	A+



The classic Etch A Sketch makes its way to the PC for children and adults.

Etch A Sketch (Screen Magic/Windows) Ohio Art's classic hand-held test of coordination and dedication comes to the computer screen as a delightful and surprisingly versatile selection of drawing tools and games for the younger set. A replica of the familiar red-border box appears on the Windows Screen, surrounding a field on which a variety of colored points, circles, squares, stars or other shapes can be used to draw, follow mazes, connect places on a series of maps and other activities.

Finished drawings can be saved or printed out. While onscreen directions position it for children who can read, some of its activities seem more suited for pre-schoolers; so an ideal way for them to play would be as a shared activity between parent and child. **B+** (Ross Chamberlain)

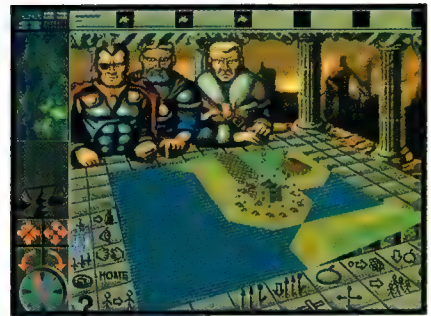
BreakThru (Spectrum Holobyte/MS-DOS) Alexey Pajitnov's latest game is perhaps his best successor for **Tetris** to date, and a celebration of Perestroika as well. A succession of walls, built of different-colored bricks plus nonstandard construction materials like bombs, rockets and soda cans, must be torn down. Clicking on any group of two or more adjacent bricks of the same color eliminates that group, and bricks and other items above fall down to replace them. The bombs, rockets and special super bricks help eliminate bricks in other ways. Soda cans have to be bombed or rocketed away. There is a time limit and three tries for each wall, and six series of walls, named for cities. Then it starts over at increased difficulty. The music is lively, the art up to par and the addiction



level is high: at an easy level with five-minute timing, it is fairly easy to stay at the screen for hours, racking up high scores. **B-** (Ross Chamberlain)

Powermonger (Electronic Arts/Macintosh)

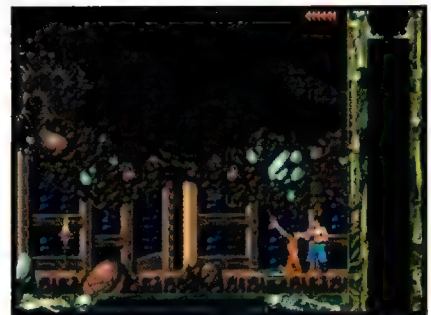
This one-player strategy game takes a bare-knuckles approach to territorial expansion. As a general, the player marches into a land and subjugates its petty warlords. The Conquest Balance indicates progress toward putting the necessary two-thirds of the population under your



iron heel.

The icon interface is well suited to the Macintosh, and responsiveness is excellent on newer machines. Long play-life is another plus. **B+** (Arnie Katz)

Blackthorne (Interplay/MS-DOS) This is the same game as appeared for the SNES earlier this year, with identical game play and story line: The prince of a strange world returns from protective exile on Earth, where he became a tough



mercenary, in time to try to retake his world and kingdom from the cruel sorcerer Sarlac and his demonic minions. The smooth animation, excellent graphics and stirring music have been retained, all sharper now, on a VGA monitor and soundboard. The main differences are that the inventory stays onscreen, where it had to be called by the Select button on the SNES, and the substitutions of keyboard controls for controller buttons. A Gravis pad and joystick are also supported. **B+** (Ross Chamberlain)

Double Talk Sports Edition (B&R Games/Windows)

The second helping of the publisher's game show quiz program. Contestants are given two phrases and must come up with a pun that ties them together. It's a simple play mechanic, but it takes a lot of ingenuity.

The graphics are last-generation, strictly utilitarian. The sound is not much better. **Double Talk** is a great idea that cries out for top-of-the-line audiovisuals. Even as it is, this product delivers plenty of entertainment value, even for those who aren't walking sports trivia encyclopedias. **B** (Arnie Katz)

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TEX MURPHY'S BACK IN TOP FORM

Live the adventure in Under a Killing Moon

Welcome to the year 2042. Fill the shoes of Tex Murphy (played by Chris Jones), an out-of-work private investigator living in the war torn ruins of Old San Francisco. One may remember Tex from *Mean Streets* and *Martian Memorandum*, two earlier Access titles. Since the end of the last installment, several important changes have occurred. The third world war took its toll and Earth's atmosphere is no longer stopping gamma radiation. The radiation seeping in has caused those not naturally immune to become mutants. This has provided humanity with a whole new type of prejudice.

Race, religion and sex are no longer the basis of bias. Instead, there is a large faction of "Norms" (people not affected by the radiation) who see mutants as less than human. The police are even accused of not properly investigating crimes perpetrated against mutants. Tex is different. He is not prejudiced and has many friends who are

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Access Software
DESIGNER: C. Jones, A. Conners
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Adventure/RPG
HD SPACE: 10 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

mutants—friends who come in very handy for information throughout the game.

The action begins with the Voice of The Big P.I. in the Sky (James Earl Jones) and a little background to set up the story. It then continues with a visit from Tex's former boss the Colonel (Brian Keith). Tex and the Colonel have not spoken for 15 years, since Tex rolled him over to the Private Investigators Ethics Board for unsavory practices. The Colonel is over it and gives Tex a warning to stay out of a case he is working on. "You've got no idea what kind of people you're dealing

with here. They'll find you in the bay with a bullet in your head and I don't need any more strain on my conscience." Tex is unconcerned, especially since he is not working on a case at the moment. With a little information from his friends he gets a job, the first of three cases that must be solved to complete the game.

The people in the neighborhood are an essential resource in starting: Chelsea Bando (Suzanne Barnes) has a newsstand across the street from Tex's office. Rook Garner (Doug Vandegrift) owns Rook's



Pawn Shop. Francesca Lucido (Jeri Christian), along with her husband Sal (Doug Vandegrift), owns the Slice O Heaven pizza restaurant. Louie LaMintz (Randall Edwards) runs the Brew & Stew restaurant which Tex frequents. There are others but these provide all the vital information for a good start in the game.

As events progress, players will begin to develop more and more background on a splinter faction known as the Crusade For Genetic Purity. This is a rapidly growing underground organization centered on the belief that mutants are sub-human and have no rights. Tex, disgusted by these beliefs, elects to find out more about the political agenda of these dangerous subversives. Eventually, he becomes aware of a fiendish plot to eliminate all who are "genetically impure." It is the culmination of generations of planning by a secret brotherhood. The bad guys need only one item to set their plans in motion and Tex inadvertently supplies them with it.

With this weighing heavily on his conscience, Tex sets out to stop them. This quest leads players all over the city, and eventually, to an orbiting city known as the Moon Child. The story builds to a dramatic climax far above the Earth, and players have only one desperate chance to set things right.

This synopsis is adequate to outline the basic thrust of **Under A Killing Moon (UAKM)**, but it cannot do justice to the nuances that Access has included. Plot, pacing, characterization and dialogue are interwoven with a masterful hand. As such, **UAKM** stands out as a wonderfully intriguing piece of fiction on its own merit, notwithstanding its value as a game.

UAKM is similar to many interactive adventure games in that one must find and use objects to manipulate different aspects of the environment and advance the plot. Also, one must interact correctly with numerous non-player characters (NPC's) to solve individual puzzles and quests. But that is where the similarity ends.

The graphics in **Under A Killing Moon** are stunning. The characters are not animations, they are real actors. The cast includes such notables as Brian Keith, Margot Kidder and Russell Means. The sets are a mixture of computer-generated graphics and real items incorporated to produce the best overall visual presentation of a game environment the staff of **EG** has ever seen. When Tex pours a drink, it is from a real Jack Daniels bottle. Access paid a lot of attention to the little details that allow players greater suspension of disbelief than ever before.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the video engine that Access has created for **UAKM** is its ability to retain detail at

multiple levels of zoom. For example, when wandering around Tex's office, players will notice items like certificates hanging on the wall and mail that has been slid under the door. As you walk closer to the certificate, the text becomes clear and legible while the frame surrounding it does not pixelate at all. As for the letter, most games would require players to pick up the envelope before they



could read anything. In **UAKM**, however, it is possible to crouch down, even get right on your belly to read the envelope where it lies. Again, when one does this, every detail of the picture remains clear, focused and un-pixelated. The effect is the closest approximation of normal visual acuity ever achieved in a computer game. One can only trust that this technology is a precursor of things we can look forward to in upcoming virtual realities.

Movement in the game is a little hard to get used to but, once mastered, one enjoys a full range of motion. No longer is one limited to simply moving left, right, forward and backward. In this game, one can also look up and down, crouch down, stand on their toes and look in one direction while moving in another. Movement is controlled by a combination of mouse and special keyboard functions. For best results, experiment with the mouse sensitivity controls and fine tune controller responsiveness before attempting any situation where speed is important. These interface factors make the game more interactive than anything else on the market. This also means that the clues may be harder to find, but isn't that part of the appeal of this genre?

The violence factor in **Under A Killing Moon** is low. When combat does occur, it is non-interactive. Instead, if the player makes a decision that precipitates violence, the result is shown in a video clip. After all, the game is about problem solving, not brute force diplomacy. The most powerful weapon at Tex's disposal is the player's mind. Just as in the real world, those who don't pay attention get hurt.

One feature that deserves specific mention is the Hint Menu. If one becomes stuck in a particularly nasty puzzle, one can select the Hint button from the

on-screen menu. This brings up the Hint Directory Screen which shows all the unsolved puzzles. Simply select the topic that is posing the problem and one is shown all the steps necessary to solve that puzzle. Steps that have already been completed are displayed in blue; those that remain are represented by a button with a ? on it. Up to this point, the hints have cost the player nothing. To find out about the next step click on the button and it will be displayed. Each time the player does this, however, four points are subtracted from their final score.

One of the goals of the game is to finish with as close to a perfect score as possible. The perfect score is 1,000. Points are accumulated by finding needed items, uncovering vital information and taking proper actions. The more hints one buys the lower the final score. For the hardcore problem solver there is an option to turn off the hint menu. The Hint Menu is definitely an improvement over having to pay to call a Hint line. **UAKM** may not be one of the most difficult adventure games players will encounter, but it should be considered an above average challenge with the Hint Mode disabled.

The only detractors to the game are the system requirements. Minimum hardware required is a CD-ROM drive (150KB/SEC), 386/25 mHz CPU, SVGA display (VESA compliant), hard drive with 2 MB available, 4 MB RAM, mouse and a sound board. The recommended hardware is 2X CD-ROM (300KB/SEC), 486 with SVGA VESA Local Bus display, hard drive with 10 MB available, 16 MB RAM and a 16-Bit sound card. The game will play with the minimum requirements, but video size is reduced to the point that much of the detail is lost, which decreases the ability to see all of the necessary objects. The frame rate is so much slower that many players will not have the endurance and patience to get through the game in this degraded state. In order to really appreciate what Access has done with **Under A Killing Moon**, run it on a machine which is close to the recommended specs.

On a final note, some players may squawk at the asking price of almost \$100 for **UAKM**. That may seem high at first but one must also consider that, for the price, one is getting four CD-ROMs loaded with some of the best audiovisuals to ever hit the streets. Amortize that across the time it takes to complete the game (20-40 hours), and cost will seem much less of a significant factor.

Here's a final tip. Try to save **UAKM** for a long, rainy weekend when your calendar is clear, because once you start, you are going to be glued to your monitor until it's over. ■ (Ed Dille)

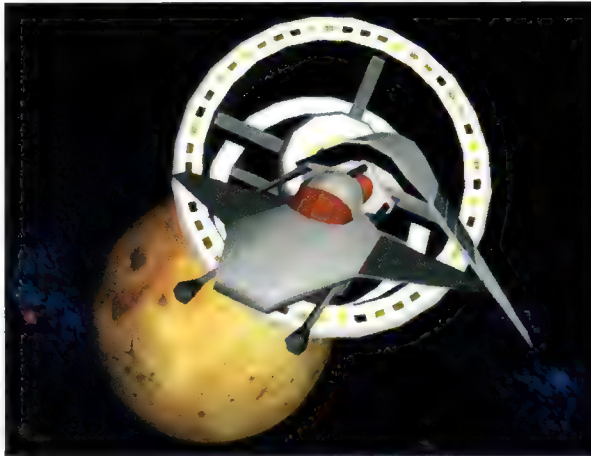
REAL SPACE

Microsoft Space Simulator is no shoot-'em-up

A lot of the so-called "simulation" products created these days aren't really much of a simulation from a scientific perspective. For example, Origin's popular **Wing Commander** series features flight models which are more a reflection of atmospheric flight than flight as it might be experienced in the vacuum of space. Why in space should an attacker "fly around" to bring his forward guns to bear on an enemy? In space, the appropriate move would be to rapidly rotate the player's ship using thrusters and fire on the bad guy even as the ship continued along the same basic trajectory.

The problem is, of course, that people want entertainment and don't want to re-think their basic assumptions about motion, gravitation and the like. "Gravitation? Inertia? Give me action!" might be a typical game player's reaction. Gamers want their spaceships to "fly" like planes because that's what they expect, and it doesn't require them to rethink their worldview.

The new **Microsoft Space Simulator (MSS)** is a product which takes a contrary view. Because it features a rigorous and scientifically accurate model of simulated space travel, **MSS** is more likely to appeal to the physicist in the player than any latent Luke Skywalker tendencies. Simply put, those who want space battles, talking cats or seedy spaceports-of-call should turn elsewhere. **Microsoft Space Simulator** effectively takes the "Hollywood" out of the space simulation experience. What remains depends upon the player's perspective. Star gazers, novice astronomers and anyone with a



mind open to the idea of learning as "entertainment" will find plenty to love in **MSS**.

Play begins with the player at the controls of the Galactic Explorer. Hovering 25,000 kilometers above the Earth, Ring Station 1 turns slowly in the field of view to your left. Numerous controls enable the player to view both the current spacecraft and the "reference object," the navigational reference used by the flight computers from any imaginable point of view. The graphics of **MSS** are 3-D rendered and look really slick in 800x600 resolution. The graphics can be stepped down to lower resolutions depending upon the player's graphics card capabilities and the speed of the computer.

The sophistication of the **MSS** flight model requires that players read the manual. Consistent with the overall feel of the product, getting up and running with **MSS** requires a basic understanding of "Newton's First Law," which boils down to the fact that the spacecraft will continue in a given trajectory even after the "thrusters" are cut. There is a disorienting feeling at first, because players will instinctively point the front of the craft where they want to go and hit the thrusters. Players who subsequently "correct" their flight path with the joystick may be surprised when their target "slides" past them even though they point directly at their objective. Newton's first law mandates some opposing thrust to redirect the craft along a new trajectory.

This first relatively easy lesson/activity is typical of the kind of interaction players can expect from **MSS**. It's all about exploration, travel and discovery. Various activ-

ities include launching, landing, orbiting, docking, rendezvous and the like. Game play is found in the precision control required to accomplish the various maneuvers. For example, to get the lunar lander to touch down with the requisite "feather touch" will take most players a lot of practice.

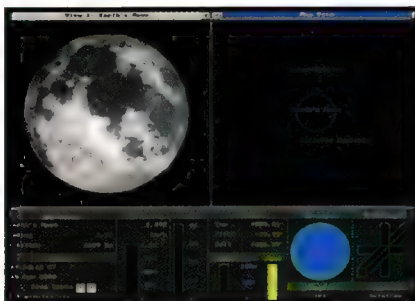
There are 10 different ships to command, each with its own specialties and quirks. There are four orbiting space stations which can serve as a starting point or destination or can be commandeered and "flown" through space. *Deep Space Nine*—move over! In the default free Flight Mode, travel occurs in real time. This means that if players choose, they can pilot a spaceship to Mars over the couple of years it would take to actually get there. Thankfully, a variable time acceleration control lets players with less of that valuable commodity on their hands arrive in a matter of seconds. A "video capture" feature lets players record their more successful moments and important astronomical discoveries for posterity, then play them back later on.

Novice astronomers will appreciate the observatory feature which lets the player observe the sky from practically any position or time in the galaxy. The program features numerous preset "observatory" locations. By incrementing the time acceleration feature, the player can watch the night sky zoom by. A toggle will activate text labels which identify the significant astronomical features, from planets to galaxies, as they pass "overhead."

MSS is hard to recommend to traditional game players as it is slow-paced, non-narrative and nothing dies at the player's hands. Weak spots include a limited number of pre-constructed missions and a unimaginative use of sound and music.

Nonetheless, this is a game which sticks to its own guns, and serves up hours of enlightened interaction instead of adrenaline and anxiety. This isn't a kid's "edutainment" title precisely, but there's plenty that is educational about it. Parents would do well to sit and play **MSS** with their kids, and everyone involved could learn a thing or two. **MSS** offers up interactivity which challenges the mind, and those with patience will be well rewarded.

B- (Dave Gerding)



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DESIGNER: BAO
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Simulation
HD SPACE: 15 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A



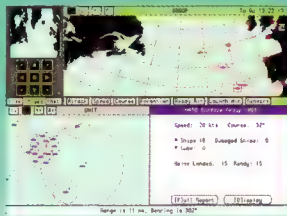
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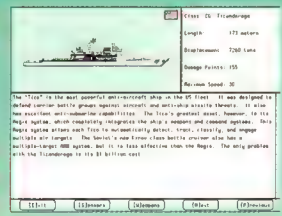
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TRACE A TRAIL ACROSS ARKANIA

Seek the Salamander Stone in *Realms of Arkania*

Role-playing gamers will be delighted to learn that **Star Trail**, the second episode of Sir-Tech's **Realms of Arkania** series, has just been released, and like its



predecessor, features dozens of hours of combat, magic and exploration. Moreover, the game has been improved significantly in both graphics and game play. The new automapping feature, for example, is one of the best ever seen, and the 256-color graphics far outshine the previous episode's 16-color displays.

For those who aren't familiar with **Realms of Arkania**, **Star Trail** is a role-playing game (RPG) not unlike the ever-popular **Might and Magic** series. Based on Germany's top role-playing system, the game features first-person viewpoint and smooth-scrolling 3-D graphics, as well as travel across a vast countryside with many towns and villages. Along the way, the

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Sir-Tech
DESIGNER: Attic
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Role-Playing
HD SPACE: 24 MB min/70 MB full
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

player runs into all manner of monsters and mayhem, which he must surmount using combat and magic skills.

The game begins in the small town of

Kvirasim where the player learns about his quest to locate an artifact known as the Salamander Stone. As he roams the town's streets late at night, the player knocks on doors to gather information from residents and from the rowdy crowds in bars. After learning about his quest, the player finds an inn in which to spend the night, and in the morning, sets off on his journey across **Star Trail**'s world.

Traveling in the game is done mostly via a full-screen, overhead-view map on which the player plans a route.

After planning the route, the computer draws a line on the map as the player's party travels. Whenever an event

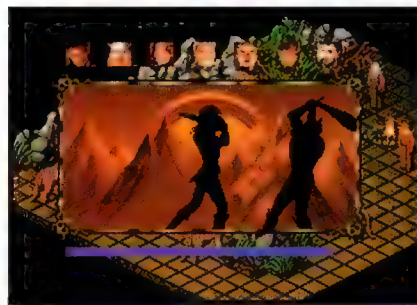
occurs, such as the player's meeting up with another traveler or needing to camp, a dialog box pops up and asks what the player wants to do.

For example, early in the game the player discovers a priestess beset upon by orcs. Here the player can choose to help the priestess or continue on the journey.

Often during a journey, the player must set up camp. Unlike many role-playing games, this involves much more than just settling in for the night. Specifically, before dropping off to sleep, the player must set up a watch schedule, as well as hunt up supplies like food and herbs. Only after assignments are made should the player let his adventurers drop off into dreamland.

Of course, like most role-playing games, **Star Trail** offers up a collection of creatures and characters with which the player must do battle. The battle scenes take place on a 3-D isometric-view battleground. The player moves characters from square to square, casting spells and

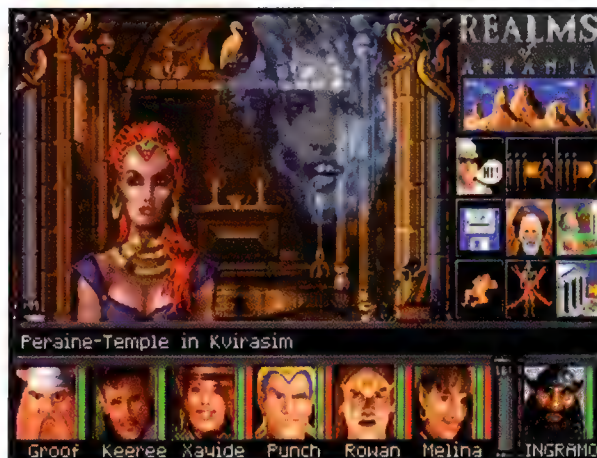
attacking opponents, all via mouse commands. Or, the player may choose to simply let the computer handle the action. In any case, the battle scenes tend to be



lengthy. Most battles take at least a couple of minutes. Anyone who doesn't like this type of battle may not get far with **Star Trail**.

As mentioned previously, **Star Trail** features one of the best automapping features in the business. Not only does the game automatically map wherever the player goes, it also enables the player to jump to locations with a click of the mouse. In addition, clicking on important buildings provides the player with the name of the establishment. It's a snap to find and get to required places.

As if this weren't enough, the Automap Screen also includes a zoom command that lets the player view the map at



various levels of detail.

The graphics and animations in the game are state-of-the-art. The CD-ROM version of the game features extra cinematic sequences as well as digital speech and sound effects.

Add to this **Star Trail**'s lengthy story, along with minutely-detailed player statistics (including over 50 skills and negative and positive player attributes) and a diary that automatically keeps track of the player's game progress, and you have got an RPG that will most likely intrigue just about any RPG fan. **B** (Clayton Walnut)

**Ages ago,
In the damp passages of
the Old World
Evil was defeated
And Chaos was cast into
the shadows of time...**

**In darkness
It waits**

Dungeon Master II

This Christmas, the Master of all Dungeon Games Returns

TANK WORLD

Live the danger of tank warfare in **Armored Fist**

A Soviet advance recon unit has been spotted in the tree line 1,000 meters to your front. A quick glance up and down the ridge assures you that the remainder of the company has been awakened, their vacant stares either a product of recent slumber, or testimony to unspoken fears. The first bird song is shattered unceremoniously with the flat scream of flying shells that marks the bombardment.

Through the flying dirt, you vaguely make out the van of a Soviet armored column. Yeah ... today is going to be a real peach!

Armored warfare has never been a cake walk but, to date, no other tank simulator has brought this fact home as succinctly as **Armored Fist**. Modern armored warfare is a nightmarish exercise in sheer killing power. The scenario designs in **Armored Fist** are equally unforgiving. The unprepared will learn the true meaning of the term "cannon fodder."

Armored Fist contains 47 missions, each of which may be played individually or as part of a campaign. There are seven total campaigns. The first is a short series of four missions designed to familiarize players with the basics of operating their vehicles. The other campaigns are an average of seven missions, each becomes progressively more difficult.

When the game is first booted up, players elect which type of hardware they will use, eastern or western. Choose eastern armor and command platoons and companies composed of T-80 main battle tanks and BMP-2 armored personnel carriers. By selecting western equipment, players can command units composed of M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks and M3 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles.

Note that the side chosen does not alter



the initial starting positions of the scenarios. If the objective of a given scenario is to cross a ridge line and assault an enemy communications post, shifting to eastern hardware will not put the player defending the ridge line, just conducting the assault in different tank types.

Is this difference more than just cosmetic? Yes, but not as significantly so as in the real world. For example, the penetrating power of Russian rounds had to be upped vs. the M1A2 or the game would have had some serious play balance issues. As currently configured, however, **Armored Fist** is challenging on both sides of the fence, which should be the objective of all tactical game designs.

Depending on the scenario, the player will command from one to 16 vehicles. Each vehicle has its own AI driven tank commander who will execute orders when the player is not personally commanding that vehicle. As in Spectrum Holobyte's **Flight of the Intruder**, players can hop back and forth at will during the course of a mission, fine tuning the movement of individual units and adding their personal fire support to obstacles encountered along the way.

If players fail to intervene, they will lose every mission. That is incorporated into the design at the most fundamental level. Some might attribute this to poor AI modeling for the subordinate tank commanders, but the reality is much different. First, if it were possible to just sit back and let the AI tank commanders accomplish the mission objectives, **Armored Fist** would not be a game, only a glorified slide show with some nice pyrotechnics. Second, a close examination

of the multiple layering of the AI model reveals that it actually is quite sophisticated.

Players can alter several levels of skill and tactical parameters, each combination of which produces a unique behavioral effect for the given platoon. To examine all of the possible ramifications of each change in these parameters would require more space than is allotted here.

It is possible to configure the AI models for each of your subordinate platoons so precisely as to treble your chances for successful mission accomplishment. However, they can never be developed to the point that they will function flawlessly, exclusive of player interaction.

In addition to mastering AI configuration, successful tactical commanders will have to assimilate all the nuances of combined arms tactics. Both sides have some limited artillery and air support, the exact amount of which varies by scenario. By using these assets to advantage, savvy tactical commanders can minimize their losses enroute to the mission objectives.

Concurrently, because time constraints are always an issue as well, airpower and artillery bombardment can be used to deal with tertiary threats along the line of movement that would, unharassed, delay one's advance to the point that not all of the objectives would be met.

In addition to paying homage to real world tactical considerations, the other factor that sets **Armored Fist** apart from the competition is its incredibly realistic terrain model. Using an improved Voxel space engine, Novalogic has created a number of unique battlefields, ranging from rolling sandscapes and wadis in the desert to wind-swept arctic tundra. Astute players will learn to use each topographic feature to advantage, masking their movement and going "hull down" on ridge lines to minimize how much of their tank is exposed to return fire.

In its day, **M-1 Tank Platoon** from MicroProse was a standout product. The chief complaint from players, however, was the lack of variety in the terrain. **Armored Fist** rectifies this shortcoming and continues well beyond its predecessors, featuring an incredibly clean and intuitive interface, tremendous support for the Thrustmaster series controllers and a veritable sensory feast of sights and sounds that bring the battle home.

Novalogic has attended to each detail of this opus of armored warfare lovingly. From the first cry of "contact," you will feel as if you have stepped into a new reality. When the beads of sweat pop on your forehead, the only consolation you will feel is the knowledge that you will be able to go home again. ■ (Ed Dille)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Nova Logic
DESIGNERS: Seezholzer, Robinson, Kosoy
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Tank Warfare
HD SPACE: 10 MB
PLAYERS: 1

“30 levels of excitement
using the Wolfenstein 3-D engine
give you as much action & exploration as you can handle.”

—*Computer Game Review*

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“The bottom line? This game is a heck of a lot of fun to
play...Corridor 7 is a well-produced compelling game.”

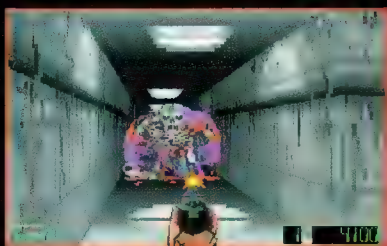
—*Bill Kunkel, Electronic Games*

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THE ROAD TO HELL

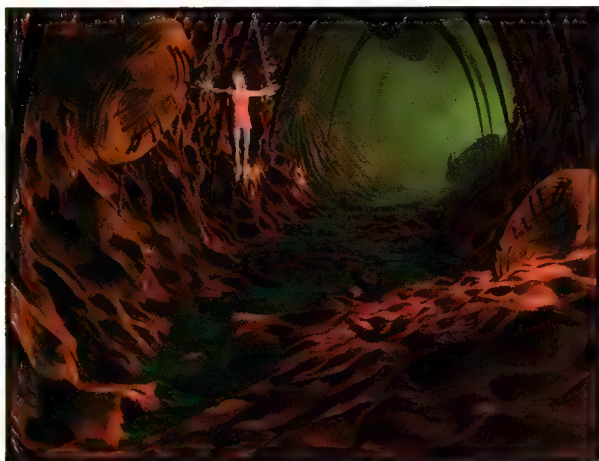
Take 2 Interactive's Hell: A Cyberpunk Adventure

The problem is simple. Last night the government agency you work for, the Artificial Reality Containment Bureau, sent a scrub team to kick in your door and try to blow holes in your pretty torso. You and your lover/partner managed to get away, but had to steal clothes from a laundromat. Now your biggest ally is a demon doing a bad gangster impersonation. If you want to get your name cleared, you are going to have to march into hell to get some answers.

Not a good week.

This is the setup for **Hell: A Cyberpunk Adventure** from Take 2 Interactive Software, a game that can boast one of the deepest plot lines in multimedia to date.

In the year 2060 the Hand of God Party gains control of the United States, and at the same time, mysterious portals to hell



open, and demons start to walk the Earth. A strange combination ensues. Simultaneously appearing are rabidly right-wing government that outlaws most technology (and anything they consider morally objectionable) and cybernetically-enhanced demons who make deals for souls, wholesale.

The player takes the role of Gideon or Rachel, a pair of partners/lovers who work for the Artificial Reality Containment Bureau, ARC. Their job is to find and imprison outlaw techs who run illegal "virts" or virtual realities. Something goes wrong; these faithful servants of the Hand and its policies are scheduled to be executed.

To learn the reason for this and to clear their names, Rachel and Gideon discover



startling truths about the government, society, hell and themselves.

Probably the biggest drawing point for **Hell** is the use of some big-name talent in their acting. Dennis Hopper, Grace Jones and supermodel Stephanie Seymour all act in the game, though only Seymour has video footage.

In an interesting design decision, Take 2 rendered all but a few actors in the game in 3-D Studio and used voice acting to provide spoken lines for the animations. This had a surprisingly good effect. Images of Jones and Hopper were scanned into the game and then modeled using

animation techniques. In the case of Hopper, who plays a speed-rapping, gangster demon called Mr. Beautiful, this created a great effect of blending the actor's natural style with the appearance of a demon.

The greatest strength of this program is in the depth of the story line. The plotting found in **Hell** would do a cyberpunk novel proud. This is a game with some commentary to make, and it makes it.

Unfortunately, the biggest drawbacks to **Hell** are found in this same literary depth. First, the amount of background is so deep, it can leave a player a bit lost. Like a good cyberpunk novel, trying to figure out the background and how it fits together can be something of a challenge at the beginning of the game. Later, as more

pieces of the puzzle fit into place, a great story unfolds.

A bigger drawback is found in game play. This is a role-played story, and as such, there isn't a huge amount of game play involved. There are puzzles to solve, yes, but the amount of interaction in the game is limited.

Combat is a good example. Instead of a straight combat system, Take 2 has opted to use scripted combat that is more puzzle oriented. The player must choose which weapons and actions to use in fighting a particular combat. At that point the game switches to a cinematic cut sequence, one of the winning battle if the player has chosen correctly and one of the losing battle if they have failed.

While this game is a must, comparable in the interaction aspect to the latest **Police Quest**, the unknown nature of the world makes the interaction feel a bit more forced and less satisfying.

However, as a story and a cinematic experience, **Hell** does astonishingly well. Seven animations are provided for each character with which the party interacts, and with animations dovetailing into each other seamlessly, the characters look and act real. The sound playback on our test bed 486/33 using an Ultrasound Max sounded as clean as CD, and the music worked well with the game.

One note can be taken as either good or bad, depending on your point of view: this is a game for a mature audience. The themes dealt with in **Hell** are of a mature nature, and no attempt has been made on the part of the writers to clean up the street language. Those with small children might want to keep this in mind.

While language, for some, and interactivity are sore points with **Hell**, the depth of story and solid art animations should more than overcome the limitations for most gamers. Players who love CRPGs and cyberpunk should seriously consider marching straight into the gates of **Hell**.

B (John P. Withers)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Take 2 Interactive
DESIGNER: Antinori, Campa, Lennon
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Cyberpunk Role-playing
HD SPACE: 5 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

This one you won't want to miss.

It's been nearly three years in the making with a budget we won't even talk about. It employed a team of over a hundred people, including programmers, artists, musicians and writers as well as Hollywood make-up and special effects houses (we liked the flames in *Backdraft*™ so we hired the movie's special effects house to bring in a little heat). As the creators of *Wasteland*™ and *The Bard's Tale*™, our goal was to produce a game every bit as innovative and unique. We think you'll like the results.



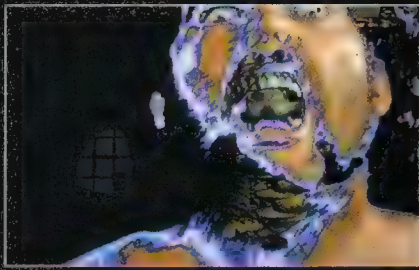
Art and Stuff

Graphically, the game is state-of-the-art stunning (we're a little biased but check out the screen-shots for yourself).

We used a combination of live actors and computer generated creatures with Silicon Graphics environments and magical effects which were painstakingly rendered down to the finest crack, doorway and magical lightning storm.

The Game's the Thing

A combination of traditional role playing and interactive story-telling, *Stonekeep* mixes a detailed



storyline and character interaction with puzzle-solving, magic systems, character attributes and combat. It all comes together in a system that allows for quality story-telling combined with a powerful, yet easy-to-use control system (intuitive without being watered down).



The Box, the Book and Story

The packaging is every bit as cool as the game.

Shipping in a special tombstone-shaped, hologram box, the package starts you on your quest "through dark corridors, treacherous

sewers and subterranean realms of faeries, magick and the living dead." (We had to throw a bit of marketing hype in



here somewhere.) Along with the skeleton hologram cover, you also get a limited edition, hard-bound *Stonekeep* novella by Steve Jackson and David Pulver.

Interplay

"By Gamers. For Gamers."™ is Interplay's slogan and *Stonekeep* is the kind of game we've always wanted to play.

It looks cool, sounds great and tells a good story. It's one of those games you'll stay up playing until three in the morning on a work night. Basically, it's just a lot of fun.



A CD-ROM, Role-Playing Experience for IBM and Compatibles.

STONEKEEP

FLIGHT SIM LANDS ON THE 3DO

Paramilitary vs. a 'New Age' threat in VR Stalker

Okay, couch potato pilots, let's scramble! You've had your arcade kicks, now it's time to get down to the serious business of reclaiming the United States from conquest in the first decade of the next century.

The arrival of **VR Stalker** on the 3DO provides owners of that system with their first classical flight simulator. Unlike Electronic Arts' recent arcade-style combat sim, the superb **Shockwave**, this new release from American Laser Games is more in line with the traditional PC-based

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: American Laser Games
DESIGNER: Morpheus Interactive
SYSTEM: 3DO
THEME: Combat Flight Sim
HD SPACE: N/A
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

flight simulators as published by companies such as Spectrum-Holobyte, Microprose and EA. It offers full 360 degree movement, weapons selection and a seductive backstory.

The near-future plot sounds a lot like the product of a Tom Clancy fan in an especially paranoid frame of mind. According to the beautifully-produced introductory sequence, the breakup of the Russian empire and the U.S.'s one-sided victory in the Gulf War lulled our nation into a false sense of security. Politicians immediately slashed defense spending,

leaving us sitting ducks for a predatory new power, a country/league/organization (neither the introduction nor the flimsy documentation ever actually states what it is) known as the New Age Cooperative Coalition (NACC).

In the year 2001, the NACC forces attack the U.S., wasting New York and Los Angeles via thermo-nuclear strikes.

Before long, what's left of the United States is fragmented, without central communication. The country falls under sporadic martial law as the NACC forces install themselves in the catbird seat, taking over air force bases, anti-aircraft installations and other strategic locations.

Fortunately, while all those shortsighted, overconfident politicians were busy deciding how to best spend the so-called Peace Dividend, a group of independent "leaders" started their *own* army. From secret underground bases in the American Southwest, their elite corps of pilots use a combination of virtual reality and wired-gated technology to strike back at the NACC.

Using a conventional flight sim interface, the player guides a nice cross-section of combat aircraft—including everything from F-16s, F-117s and F-119s, to A-10 Tank Killers and X-2s—in an effort to reclaim air bases, destroy nuke silos,

restore the communication satellite uplinks, and eventually, drive the NACC to its collective knees. The game starts in Utah, where the player must reclaim Hill AFB, then moves on to New Mexico, Arizona and so on, until the player has retaken the entire United States.

The gamer can fly the various aircraft using either a first-person Heads-Up Display

(HUD), or a faux first-person POV, with the jet fighter shown onscreen from behind. The HUD includes an altimeter, weapons display, radar, artificial horizon, throttle, air speed indicator, enemy ground-to-air indicator, ground lock indicator and air-to-air lock.

VR Stalker ("Stalker" is the player's military code name) is a lot of fun, bringing the cerebral and kinetic challenge of computer-style combat flight sims to a new medium. There is, however, a problem. Despite its fully animated, totally enthralling lead-in, the game itself is surprisingly primitive.



The ground objects, for example, are fairly simple polygon constructs, with virtually no topography or texture-mapped buildings for the player to either destroy or use as visual cues. As a result, the ground acquires a flat sameness that has not been seen in top-of-the-line computer flight sims in years.

This, in turn, leads to the game's most serious problem: It totally fails to simulate a sense of moving at high speed. Whether the player's aircraft is limping along at an air speed of 45 mph or blasting on the afterburners at 100 mph-plus, the only visual speed cue the player has is the movement of the landscape below. Since that landscape has so few visible ground objects, that all-important illusion of movement is largely thwarted.

That said, **VR Stalker** is still a wonderful novelty on the 3DO. For one thing, all aircraft functions and commands are assigned to the controller, thereby eliminating the bothersome joystick-and-keyboard command system employed by most computer flight sims.

Perhaps if the non-interactive introduction weren't so stellar, expectations for the actual game wouldn't be so high. But after watching that eye-popping cut scene of the player's aircraft taking off, the game itself can't help but be somewhat disappointing. ■ (Bill Kunkel)



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THE CREATURE LIVES ... BARELY

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

It's become almost a rule of thumb within all sectors of the entertainment industry that the appearance of an author's name over the title of a work all but guarantees that the work will bear no fidelity whatsoever to its source material. **Mary Shelley's Frankenstein** does nothing to dispel this notion.

Originally conceived in 1816 as part of a ghost story contest among the Shelleys, Lord Byron and Byron's physician, Polidori, to occupy themselves during an extended group sojourn to Geneva, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, wasn't finished until 1817. When it was published, the work



received mixed reviews, but was an unqualified hit with the masses. As early as 1823, *Frankenstein* was translated, performed and parodied, a trend that continues today. The public's continued

fascination for the work is reflected in its use of universal anxieties—family conflicts, scientific mistrust and innate sympathy for the disinherited.

In 1931, Hollywood gave the world Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's disfigured creature, and established the new standard for the title. Following that bright spot, and the James Whale-directed sequel (*Bride of Frankenstein*), however, the creature became more and more of a prop in subsequent films, strapped to an operating table through the first four reels and fast on his way to becoming a square-headed, bolt-necked icon for the ages.

Now fast forward to 1994, and Francis Ford Copolla and Kenneth Branagh's film production of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and Sony Imagesoft's Sega CD release of the same title.

While *Psygnosis'* intent was to follow the movie plot line based on the original manuscript, **Frankenstein**—a combination puzzle, adventure and fighting game—begins in Frankenstein's garret in Ingolstadt, rather than in the icy desolation of the Arctic. The Monster must reason and fight his way from the Garret, past Ingolstadt, the Forest, and Geneva.

After Geneva, the Creature faces a Return to Ingolstadt, attempts to instigate the Building of the Bride, and begins a sequence onboard the ice-bound ship, the

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Alexander Nevsky. The locations of the seven levels capture the essence of the novel, even if the execution falls short.

Frankenstein places control of the Creature in the hands of the player, a decision that makes absolutely no sense from a design point of view. The Creature, after all, has no real agenda (until the idea of having Victor create a mate dawns on him which, in game terms, never really happens), unlike Frankenstein, who feels



under moral compulsion to track down and destroy his hapless, renegade "son."

Let's think this through: the Creature, who is not a mindless zombie, does speak (or at least has text boxes, as do the other characters) and is driven by instinct, causing him to be equally brutal or tender—while he does burn down a house, he also rescues prisoners from a jail. However, in the end, would it not have been more fun

to stick with the concept of Frankenstein tracking down his Creature, and perhaps *preventing* him from burning down buildings and killing others?

Visually, **Frankenstein** is an impressive cinematic effort. The 3-D rendered engine allows the Monster to roam and explore in a realistic manner—obstacles hinder his progress and must be dealt with—and presents an unusually large field of view when the Creature is inside buildings. The large, rotoscoped sprites offer the gamer realistic-looking characters, human and otherwise. The first-person, full-motion video (FMV) transitional scenes provide a visual sense of playing as the Monster, an effect that is not present through the interactive portions of the game.

The locations are vivid and realistic, even if some of the situations are fantasized (one of the first obstacles the Creature faces are electric eels squirming on the floor in a pool of water). The outdoor settings capture the feel of 19th century Europe and enhance **Frankenstein's** atmospheric ambiance.

The side-scrolling street fight sequences are not only the weakest part of the game, but they are also a visual blight on it. The sudden transfer to a flat 2-D world for hand-to-hand combat totally undermines the effect Psygnosis seems to have been striving for, while the notion of a gothic

street fighting game within the context of this faux-faithful action-adventure is so silly it hardly merits discussion.

The musical score is superior to most Sega CD fare. With four audio tracks, the music remains atmospherically appropriate with enough range to avoid repetition. The sound effects, meanwhile, are excessively understated; one expects more than a grunt from someone who has just been run through with a sword, for example.

The overall problem with **Frankenstein** is that it tries to be a game for every genre: *mano a mano* combat for the street fighting folks; gathering objects for adventure and RPG aficionados; and object manipulation for puzzle solvers.

While in theory this electronic game-buffet idea might succeed, in **Mary Shelley's Frankenstein** the amount of confusion and downright foolishness it invokes destroys any semblance of an intelligent game. **C+** (Laurie Yates)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft
DESIGNER: Psygnosis
SYSTEM: Sega CD
THEME: Action/Adventure
HD SPACE: 24 (to save)
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 7

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THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different reviewers on some of the latest software.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Capron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Steven L. East L.A. Times
Aegis Guardian/Fleet	A	B+	A+	B
Android Assault	C-	D	D+	-
Battle Isle, 2000	A-	A	A	-
Brutal: Paws of fury	B+	C+	B-	-
Dark Sun II	B	B	B	-
Day of the Tentacle	A-	A	A+	A+
Dennis Miller (200)	D	F	D	D
Dune	B+	B+	A-	A
Escape ... Monster M.	A-	B	C	B
The Horde 300	B-	C+	B	C+
Inca II	B-	B	B+	B-
John Madden (200)	A	A	B+	A
Jurassic Park (200)	B	B	B	B
Lethal Enforcers	A	A-	B+	C
Lodestar	B-	B-	B	B-
Man Enough	D	D	F	F
Microcosm	B+	B	B-	C+
Millennium Auction	B+	A-	B	B+
Myst	B+	B+	A+	A+
Outpost	A	C	C	B+
Pataank	D	D	D	B
Police Quest: Open S.	B+	B	B	B
Psychotron	C-	D+	D+	B
Return to Ringworld	B	B-	B	C
Return to Zork (Mac)	B+	B+	B+	B
7th Guest (PC)	A-	A-	A	A-
Shockwave	B+	B+	A	B+
SimCity Enhanced	A-	B-	B-	C-
Slayer	B-	C	B	C+
Star Crusader	A-	B+	B	A
Star Trek 25th An. Ed.	B+	A	B+	A-
Total Eclipse	B+	B	B	C-
Ultimate Domain	B	-	B-	-
Voy	C+	B	B	-
Voyeur	B	B+	B	-
Way of the Warrior	A+	A-	A	D
Who Shot Johnny Rock	C	C-	F	C
Wing Cmdr. Arnada	C	C-	B-	B
World of Xeen	B-	A+	C-	-



Relive *Saturday Night Live* with GameTek's new First 20 Years of SNL.

The First Twenty Years (Saturday Night Live) (GameTek/PC CD) If you've ever wanted to see a well-thought-out collection of skits from the first two decades of SNL presented in choppy, FMV format in a small window on a computer monitor, this is the double-CD set for you. Unfortunately, only systems with first-rate sound and graphics boards will be able to adequately handle the QuickTime clips, and even those systems will present the material in such cramped quarters that one instantly yearns for the width and breadth of a mighty, 19-inch TV screen.

Besides, given SNL's constant availability on cable's Comedy Central, most users would be better off simply collecting their own favorite sketches on tape. **C-** (Bill Kunkel)

FIFA International Soccer (EA Sports/PC CD) The best action-strategy soccer sim in video gaming now makes the transition to PC-CD courtesy of a solid conversion by



The Creative Assembly. While not up to the eye-popping standards of the 3DO edition, FIFA is easily as good as the superb Genesis and Sega CD versions, with game commentary, a player-editor option and of course, CD-level music and sound fx.

You don't need to be a *futbol* maven to appreciate the great action, either, in this intuitive entry from EA Sports. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

Night Trap (Digital Pictures/Mac CD—Mature Audiences) Originally created for Hasbro's aborted Nemo game system in the mid-'80s, this title gained notoriety in its Sega CD incarnation thanks to Sen. Leiberman's video game censorship hearings. This much-misunderstood stalk-and-trap game (players are seeking out aliens, not the scantily-clad females whom they actually must protect) still hasn't much game play to offer. As a special agent, the player must protect the lives of a group of teenagers through a monitor interface. The video and sound are clean, even on a lowly Mac Color Classic.

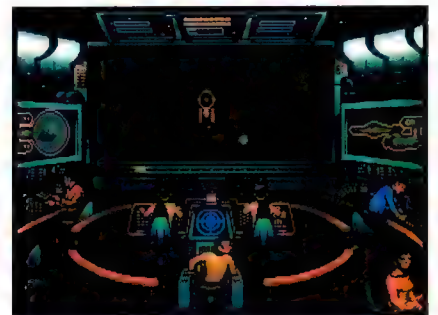
From a historical perspective, **Night Trap** is an interesting footnote, but as a game, if Senator Leiberman had ignored it, it would probably have disappeared without a ripple. **C-** (Laurie Yates)

The Journeyman Project Turbo! (Sanctuary Woods/Macintosh CD) This cult classic has been around for several years, but this new edition addresses the original game's greatest weakness—its slow speed. This new version runs three times faster than its predecessor, and includes a "Making of—" mini documentary.

Given that the original **Journeyman Project** included spectacular graphics, movie-style cut scenes, and an intriguingly nonlinear story line, and that most users' sole complaint was the game's running speed, this reissue should address any complaints among longtime fans and recent converts. **A-** (Bill Kunkel)

Spy Club (Vista Street Entertainment/Mac and PC CD) One of four new CD-ROMs from Vista Street—an established producer of television and feature films—**Spy Club** is an interactive adventure game which features softcore erotic video as part of its plot. As a *Spy Club* wanna-be, players are assigned a training mission which requires infiltrating the security system of a luxurious women's spa and locating four purses, one of which contains a stolen detonator. It's really just an excuse to look at QuickTime video of the beautiful women but it's done with a good sense of humor and an extremely slick interface. Fun, but too high-priced (\$69.95), for the abbreviated amount of game play. **B-** (Scott Wolf)

Star Trek: 25th Anniversary (MacPlay/Macintosh CD) The big addition to this enhanced version of the floppy action-adventure is speech. The disc's 6,000 lines of digitally-recorded dialogue upgrades this title from a reading exercise to a highly involving excursion into the *Star Trek* universe. The actors from the



original television series provide the voices, so there is no question about authenticity. As Capt. Kirk, the player interacts with other crew members to participate in both space combat and planetside adventures. One of the best *Star Trek* simulations just got even better. **B+** (Arnie Katz)

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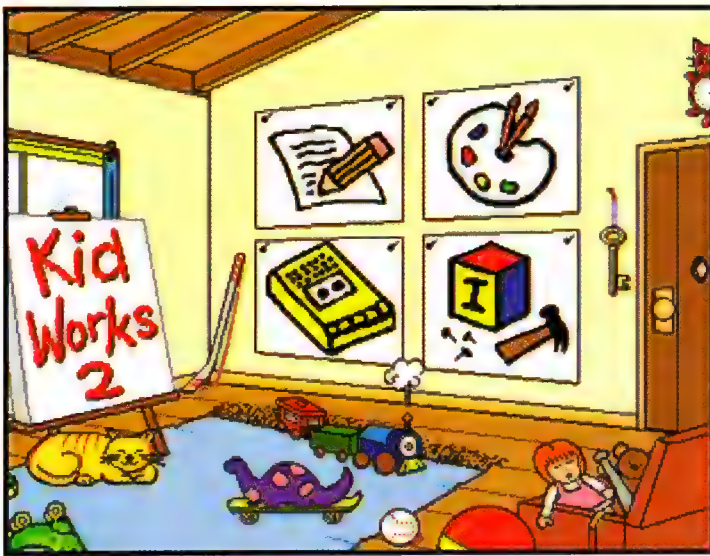
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CREATIVITY IS EASY WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS

Kids write, illustrate and hear their own stories in a sophisticated program that teaches through play

Kid Works 2 starts kids ages four to 10 on a creative path, and provides working tools to make it easy for them to get good results with their artistic efforts.

The program combines a child-simple word processor, a paint box full of tools and rubber stamps, pictures to color and a speech module to read the story back.



The method is simple and direct. The Story Writer portion of the program lets the young journalist compose a story (or sentence) by typing it on the keyboard. A press of an icon turns key words into pictures, another icon reads the text aloud.

The writer can work in Kid Text, a 36-point type, on a lined writing pad similar to the kind of paper used in kindergarten and grammar school. (Older children may prefer the 18-point type font against a plain background.)

The Speech Module works well, and does a fairly good job of saying most words correctly. There's also a speech editor option to customize the pronunciation. This works fairly well, but not perfectly:

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Davidson
DESIGNER:	The Davidson Team
SYSTEM:	PC-CD or Mac-CD
THEME:	Educational
HD SPACE:	4 MB
PLAYERS:	N/A

it's hard to tailor the accents exactly to suit, especially on single-syllable words. But despite some distinctly metallic tones now and then, it's a lot of fun to hear the stories read out line by line, and it helps reinforce the child's reading abilities.

The Story Illustrator is a simple paint box tool kit with some added bells and

whistles to please the youngsters. There are a collection of stamps, 64 crayons, a nice variety of patterns, pencil points, erasers, spray cans, mirror effects and line-making tools. There is also a selection of predrawn backgrounds to use as coloring

book pages.

The pictures created in the Illustrator Module are then saved into the Picture Box, available for use in the Story Writer Module.

The Rubber Stamp Option provides 50 images. A keystroke changes the size of the stamp from tiny, to medium, to large (about one inch), so these images can be pasted into the predrawn backgrounds and painted to suit.

This variety of tools and options is remarkably easy to master. Each time the child moves from one module to another, the program asks if the work should be saved. The child chooses thumbs up or down to answer, and the program asks if the new work should be saved on top of the old, or solicits a file name for the new story. Saved pictures are stored in the picture box, represented by a miniature image.

To insert a picture into a story, the child first opens the picture box with a point and click, then points and clicks at the specific illustration to be used. Then the

picture is deposited in the story either at the beginning or any place in the story by placing the cursor in the desired spot.

Younger users will get a great kick out of seeing their words replaced by the illustrative icons. There's a good selection of these icons, stored in boxes in the Writing Module as objects or actions. There are two ways to insert these minipix into a story. The child can write, then click on the cat icon that flanks the work area. This



automatically changes all the words that have icons. Or, the child can go into the icon boxes to pick an object or action and insert these directly into the story.

The program also provides an icon maker. This is a small canvas in the story maker. The child can draw a picture and caption it. When it's saved, it goes into My Words box, and any time that word is used, the created icon is inserted into the illustrated story.

There's nothing really unique about **Kid Works 2**. The paint box and coloring book pages are straightforward and uncomplicated to use. The word processor is simple to use, even for very young writers. The method for combining pictures with the story is direct and unconfusing. But the entire package is certainly more than the sum of its parts. It goes together very smoothly. Ease of operation was obviously the designers' main object, and



they accomplished a program that children can use alone after a minimum of parental instruction to get them started.

Kid Works 2 makes the creation of illustrated stories and poems easy, then prints them out to keep or give away. It's a nice way to encourage children to express themselves. **B+** (Joyce Worley)

13 BILLION YEARS OF CARTOONS

There really is a fun way to study the history of the universe in *The Cartoon History of the Universe*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Putnam New Media
DESIGNER: Human Code
SYSTEM: Win-CD
THEME: History
HD SPACE: 20 MB
PLAYERS: 1

Learning history can usually best be compared to a trivia contest: "Who fought in the Battle of Hastings?", "What significant document was signed in 1620?" and so on. Seldom were these events and dates placed into a meaningful context, and a few unfortunate students spend years not realizing that ancient Egypt and Greece had simultaneous histories. Even more rare was the entertaining educator; most tended to be drier than chalk sprinkled on a cracker.

However, Putnam New Media has the perfect multimedia solution to the history blahs: first, adapt Larry Gonick's popular book, *The Cartoon History of the Universe*; second, add speaking animations, an original soundtrack, realistic 3-D renderings, vivid color and over a dozen interactive games.

Finally, put out a two-disc version of *The Cartoon History of the Universe*.

Guiding budding historians on their journey is The Professor. In addition to inventing a time travel machine, he likes to dispense advice and provide assistance. Players begin their journey in his study, which is not only the location of the time machine, but also houses other artifacts that are much more than they appear.

Initially, there are three artifacts available to the player: the Minotaur scroll, the Pyramid of Cheops and the Acropolis. Each artifact has a different learning experience attached to it.

The Minotaur scroll transports the explorer to the Maze of the Minotaur. The legendary beast, who consists of the body of a man and the head of a bull, imprisoned for eternity within a Maze, continues to prowl the corridors for prey. Gamers are challenged to enter, defend themselves against the Minotaur and find their way through the Maze, where more of its history is revealed. Each time a player enters the Maze it is different, which greatly

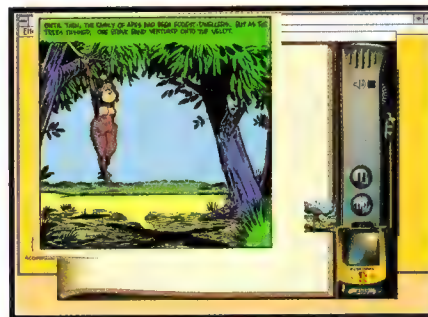
extends the playability of this segment.

The Pyramid of Cheops minigame offers an opportunity usually available only to famous archeologists and grave robbers: explore the Great Pyramid of Egypt while the ancient gods present seven challenges. First, gamers must answer the Cheops questions, which are different for each game. After a predetermined number have been correctly answered, permission is granted to continue to the Match the Gods game. In this scenario, players need to place the hieroglyphic blocks representing each god's name beneath the appropriate divine icon.

Third, gamers play an electronic version of "Operation," as they must remove a mummy's brain through its nose, without touching the sides of the nasal passages. After creating an inverted pyramid at the command of the Pyramid's gods, young historians face a round of

in the best of shape. Broken columns, walls, pediments, cornices and roof pieces litter the Greek landscape. Once each building is assembled from the ground up, it can be explored and its many puzzles solved.

The Time Machine offers 13 billion years of history that can be accessed by clicking on the Inner Chamber of the Time Machine. Gamers may either select a book



by clicking on it, or drag the "WayBack Slider" to the time or subject of interest. After that, just pressing the Go button will initiate the trip through time.

Cartoon History's graphics, while not spectacular, are eye-catching. The colors are compelling and really pop on a 256-color setting. The chatty animations are very clever and, ultimately, helpful.

(However, unlike teachers, The Professor

will disappear if he's clicked on.) The original soundtrack enhances the atmosphere of the game, while the sound effects and voice-overs prove a real delight, rather than a distraction.

The game play is easy to follow and quite captivating for children of



hieroglyphic concentration. Next, players must unscramble an image of a pharaoh. The final task set by the gods is placing the seven tiles detailing the steps to create a mummy in the proper order.

The third artifact immediately available in *Cartoon History* is The Acropolis. Players must rebuild the Propylaea (the grand gateway), the Parthenon and the Erechtheum (the Ionic temple dedicated to many gods and cults). As should be expected, these 2,000-year-old ruins aren't

all ages, as attested to by the package's claim of being suitable for "Ages 10 to 100."

In fact, *Cartoon History of the Universe's* only drawback is its poor range of sound support on several boards. But this is a minor complaint; any program that can make history this compelling, amusing and entertaining deserves a serious look.

Cartoon History is a definite winner. **A-** (Laurie Yates)

CALIFORNIA TECH

Californians, don't throw out those used computers! The Detwiler Foundation Computers for Schools Program wants your old Macintosh and IBM compatible computers with hard drives, even if they don't work anymore. First they'll be repaired and refurbished by a vocational training class, then they'll go to California schools.

The Detwiler Foundation was formed in 1991 as an independent, nonprofit organization. The purpose of the Foundation is to provide "an affordable solution to California's technology education gap."

California, once a leader in tech for schools, now ranks only 48th in the country in the number of students per computer, and most of the computers that the schools own don't have hard drives. The Computers for Schools Program is currently the largest statewide source for computers.

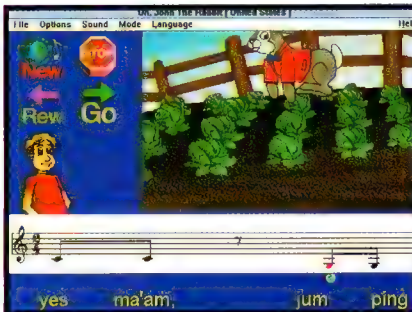
Most of the donations for the Program have come from industry. Major contributors have been Bank of America (575 computers), IBM (742), GTE (456), CompUSA and ComputerLand. Pacific Bell underwrote the program with a \$600,000 grant. Other companies and individuals are sending in their old computers instead of tossing them on the junk pile.

Until March 31, 1995, the Program has a Matching Challenge, to match every eligible computer they receive. "To date, we've processed more than 6,000 computers and related equipment. We are now receiving 1,300 a month," said Diana Detwiler. "We're starting to process a lot more 286 and 386 computers. Moreover, donated computers can be upgraded and networked at a fraction of the cost of purchasing them new."

Blue Cross recently donated 100 used computers; once they're rehabilitated, they'll go to Los Angeles schools. Jo Cazenave, California Blue Cross director of constituent relations, said, "If other businesses follow suit and donate their used computers, California will be first in the nation in the number of students per computer in no time."

Individuals or companies interested in donating to the Program, call 800-939-6000. Only IBM and IBM compatibles with hard drives, or Macintoshes with hard drives, will be accepted.

Dr. T's Sing-A-Long Around The World (*Dr. T's Music Software/PC CD-ROM—Ages 3-10*) Children learn a folk song, see the flag and hear the national anthem from any of 22 countries in this entertaining collection. Although some of the graphics are simplistic and the musical renditions won't make Carnegie Hall, there's a lot of variety. Kids hear and see the lyrics in either English or in the language of origin, read straight musical notation or guitar chording, play songs jukebox style and even print out sheet music. Not too complicated, but a nice diversion for the younger set. **B** (*Joyce Worley*)



Mrs. Winkle's Class (*Abudoe/PC CD-ROM—Ages 6-10*) Tim likes the ocean, Leon is an adventure gamer and Lisa would like to be a witch. Mrs. Winkle chats about each student's interests and delivers tidbits of information to the class. Then the user clicks on all the on-screen objects for animations, some quite involved, and all at least cute. The learning content is fairly overt, and the teacher asks questions about each lecture to test whether the information sank in. The graphics aren't anything to brag about, and the music is repetitious, but Abudoe's combination of facts and fun may charm young learners. **B** (*Joyce Worley*)

3 Balloons Alphabet, Numbers & Shapes (*SweDe/PC CD-ROM—Ages 3-6*)

Preschoolers get a headstart with this three-parter that uses QuickTime animations to teach its first lessons. The program features graphics that are more whimsical than realistic; kids locate the letter, number or correct shape among the stylized drawings, and are rewarded by an animation and some rhyming chatter. The pleasant music and colorful drawings are a real plus. **B+** (*Joyce Worley*)

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary for Kids (*Mindscape/PC CD-ROM—Ages 8-12*) It's more than a dictionary; it's also a plaything, since there are five word games. The dictionary portion of the program has 33,000 words with definitions, uses, synonyms and history of the word. Spoken



pronunciations of every word join with animations, illustrations and sound effects to make it fun. The games include word find, guessing games, a "Simon" style memory trainer, cryptograms and word chains. **A-** (*Joyce Worley*)

ER*Kids Art Center (*Electronic Arts/Windows CD-ROM—Ages 3-up*) This five-component creativity program should spark an interest in children ready to take control of their environment. Using block art, kids practice motor skills while matching shapes to create things from elephants to trains. The Stickers feature offers youngsters 12 full-color backgrounds and a set of themed stamps with which to create a picture. Costumes, an electronic paper doll sim, lets children dress characters for a variety of events, including weddings. Coloring book and paint box options present a lot of textures, colors and sound effects that kids can



experiment with. The kid-friendly interface is superb, but the **Art Center** has one drawback: nothing distinguishes it from its many competitors. **B** (*Laurie Yates*)

Mario's Time Machine Deluxe (*Mindscape/Windows CD-ROM—Ages 7-up*) The stalwart plumber must once again rescue history from Bowser and his evil Koopas in this dressed-up re-issue of last year's floppy program. With two dozen people, events, timeframes and locales, Mario provides an entertaining romp through world history. While the game stresses imagination, critical thinking and reasoning skills, and provides an on-line dictionary, original, historical music and a multimedia library, the defunct save function (the game is erased immediately) is a definite minus. **B-** (*Laurie Yates*)

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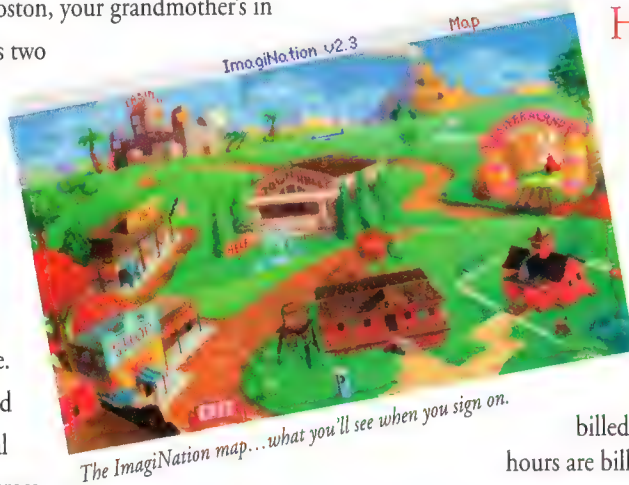
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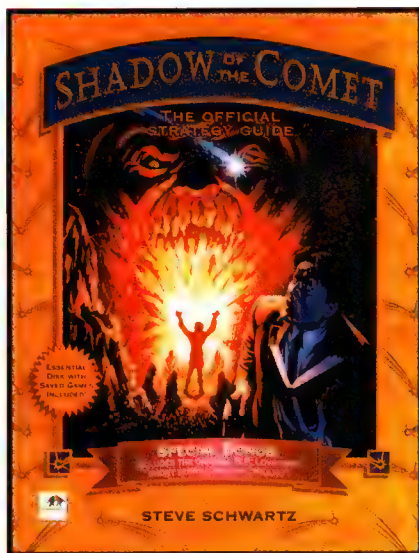
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A NEW STORY OF AN OLD HORROR

Shadow of the Comet: the Official Strategy Guide, Steve Schwartz, Prima Publishing, 192 pages + disk, \$19.95



Shadow of the Comet is the latest horror-adventure game from Infogrames by way of i-Motion, taking place in the same kind of game-universe as the **Alone In the Dark** series. All of these games take place early in this century and their fantasy-horror elements are drawn from different sources or combinations of sources.

Shadow of the Comet is in what has been dubbed the Cthulhu Mythos by fans of the writings of H. P. Lovecraft. It is a dark and strangely compelling worldview of ancient monster-gods and forces inimical to life and sanity. Schwartz has included one of these stories, *The Call of Cthulhu*, near the end of the book, not as an aid to playing the game itself, but to demonstrate the inspiration behind the game and the peculiarly realistic world in which it takes place.

The first chapter expands on the manual's directions for using the mouse and keyboard to control the game's protagonist, John Parker. Most of this is pretty straightforward, but occasionally some advice or explanation is given, especially when there is more than one option for talking to another character or selecting and using an object.

This chapter ends with a cast of characters, each with a portrait and thumbnail description—including "Our intrepid

hero." This is valuable, because there are 27 individuals to keep track of.

The second chapter begins a complete walk-through. This is broken up into three primary sections, one for each day covered in the game, and each of these is divided into a substantial number of titled subdivisions. All of these are listed in the table of contents, which should aid the player in finding solutions to particular problems without seeing too much of as yet undiscovered areas. The text is accompanied by many black-and-white screen shots, most large enough for text material on them to be easily readable. Captions for these pictures help further the player's progress, too.

Chapter three, titled "Important Game Dialogue," lists everything pertinent to the game said by and to Parker, plus some materials he reads, under optimum conditions. Depending on various factors, however, some might come out differently or not be heard at all. (Most dialogue on the CD-ROM is both spoken aloud and appears on screen in dialogue balloons.)

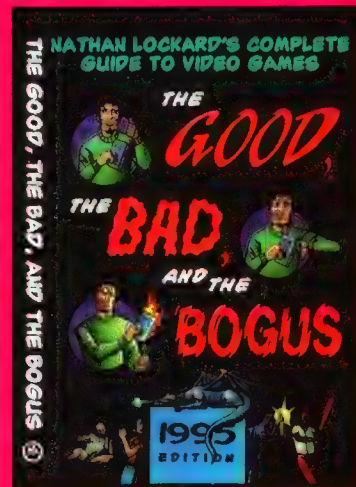
Chapter four explains how to use the disk that comes with the book. It contains 50 saved games; disk icons are scattered through the walk-through chapter at the appropriate segments. Schwartz discusses his philosophy behind the use of the disk and provides several pages of instructions. Only 10 saved games can be accessed by the game, so it's necessary to rename the appropriate files according to the game's conventions. Full directions are provided.

Part II, containing the story and an index, is followed by several pages of ads for other Prima game titles. Introducing the story, Schwartz notes that people tend to find Lovecraft's writing an acquired taste: "Either you find the stories fascinating, or they seem pointless and repulsive." Certainly to modern eyes it seems both pedantic and journalistic in an old-fashioned way, yet the chill of his topics seems to creep through to the reader's bones. Schwartz's own style, however, is clear, to-the-point and laced with non-obtrusive good humor, allowing the reader to enjoy both the game and the book.

(Ross Chamberlain)

TEEN RATER

The Good, the Bad and the Bogus: Nathan Lockard's Complete Guide to Video Games, 1995 edition, Nathan Lockard, Adventure Press, 272 pages (softbound, 14.95)



Who would you ask about whether a video game is worth the \$50 to \$80 or more it sells for? Preferably, someone who's played it. As an avid and able video game player, the 16-year-old author of this compilation of more than 1,000 brief reviews was the natural target for such inquiries. Happily, he and Adventure Press saw an opportunity to spread his articulate, insightful and sometimes sly summations to a wider audience. He has no axe to grind, so his ratings can be trusted as fair assessments for anyone. Lockard also sought out viewpoints from players in other age groups, so he offers separate star ratings (up to five) for children 4-11, youth 12-25, and adult 26 and up. Finally, he gives his own violence ratings, at low (*Amazing Tennis, Tetris*), medium (most games, from *AeroBiz* to *Zelda 3*) and high (*Mortal Kombat, Wolfenstein 3D*). The reviews are separated into sections for SNES, Sega CD and Sega Genesis, each concludes with title listings for multiplayer games and lists broken out by child, youth and adult ratings. Best of all, this book is the first in an intended series. Go for it! (Ross Chamberlain)

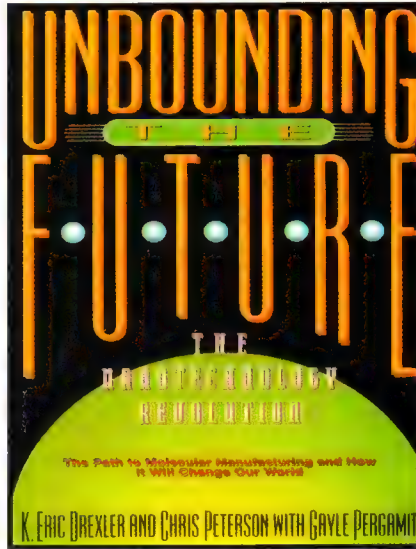
WHAT IS NANOTECHNOLOGY?

Unbounding the Future By K. Eric Drexler, Chris Peterson, Gayle Pergamit, Quill Press, 304 pages (Softbound, \$10)

Despite implications that could change the way we live in ways that would seem unimaginable, most people are totally unfamiliar with nanotechnology. Through "factual descriptions combined with future scenarios based on those facts," the authors promote understanding, if not acceptance, of this budding technology.

Nanotechnology is defined as "thorough, inexpensive control of the structure of matter based on molecule-by-molecule control of products and byproducts; the products and processes of molecular manufacturing." To place this definition in perspective, the reader is taken on a tour of the molecular world. The sights, sounds and sensations of the molecular world are vividly described as though one is actually moving among them. Readers interact with solids, liquids, gasses, protein chains, molecular machines and a human cell. The authors approach is a wonderful method for lay readers to grasp some highly complicated concepts of molecular engineering at the fundamental level.

In a visit to a virtual theme park called The Silicon Valley Faire, readers are guided through a nanomachine factory to look at the assemblers, the nanomachines which build other nanomachines. One sees how atoms are bonded to create blocks, which are then assembled into machines. The speed of these assemblers is a staggering—1 million operations per



second. The process is similar to current assembly lines where each section makes a part which is, in turn, combined with other parts to create a more complex part or a whole machine. The main difference is that the devices are "built so small that one loose molecule of pollutant would be like a brick heaved into the machine tool."

The authors also remind us to consider that, unlike the bulk technologies of today, which "take a big chunk of stuff and hack away at it until we're left with the object we want," nanotechnologies "will orchestrate atoms into products of symphonic

complexity." Steel will no longer be considered strong and tough since, on a molecular level, it is a relatively weak compound. Protein chains, on the other hand, are extremely tough and durable. It will be possible to string carbon atoms in chains which will then be linked into a three-dimensional mesh. This mesh "will be as soft as rubber at first, but when stretched to the limit would become stronger than steel." This will allow common elements to be used to create uncommon products.

The benefits of nanotechnology, it is explained, are vast. We are told that it can produce very small supercomputers, new medicines, even create thin solar panels tough enough to be used to pave roads with. This would allow for large solar collectors without having to find new places to put them. Also, it will be theoretically possible to engineer "hunter/killer" cells which search out and destroy harmful molecular combinations inside our own bodies, such as cancer cells.

It may be that our environment will be the greatest beneficiary of the nanotechnology revolution. Not only will molecular construction produce little waste, but molecular machines can be designed which will actually convert toxic chemicals into harmless compounds, assisting in the natural recovery of the contaminated ecosystem. The trash of our century, our authors say, could well be raw materials for tomorrow's molecular factories.

It is the nature of man to resist change. This resistance is based on fear associated with ignorance. Before society can embrace the changes associated with new technologies, men must overcome their ignorance by understanding the full implications of the vehicle that is inducing the change. The authors have skillfully accomplished this goal for nanotechnology. (Ed Dille)

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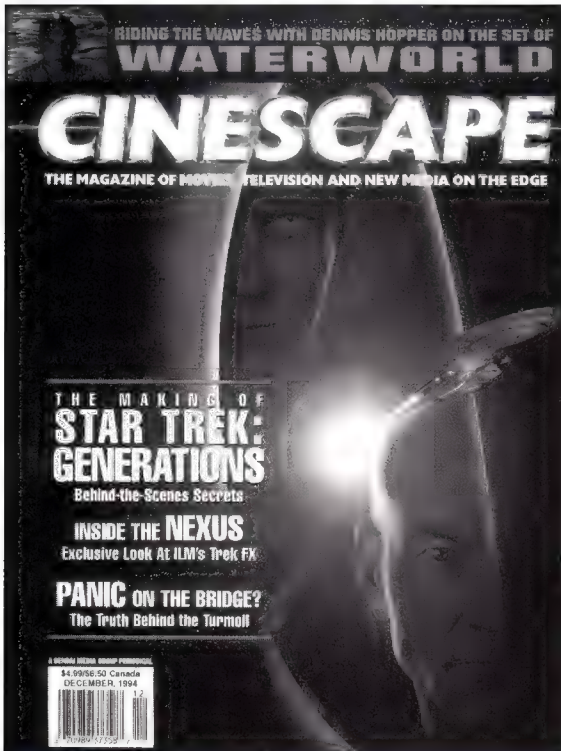
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HEIMLICH MANEUVER

To Every Gamer, Turn, Turn, Turn

The old saying goes something like, "Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it." One thing I've learned about technology in the computer era is that it makes no difference whether you pay attention to history or not. We all repeat it no matter what we do. I've dealt with this by choosing to learn from it and to use it to my advantage. What I find so surprising is the number of people who don't seem to share this ability, especially those within our own business.

First there was the Philips CD-i. The hype was huge, but so was the price. If you mentioned that to the Philips people they just looked at you like you didn't get it. They actually believed parents could sell their kids on titles like **Kings of the 12th Century** and **Stamps of the Orient**. I wondered how so many people forgot what it was like to be young. The early days of CD-i cost several publishers their business and yet, somehow CD-i is still hanging on wondering when we're all going to finally "get it."

Next up we have 3DO. The 3DO folks created a product for the "really serious gamer." It would also play audio CDs, movies on CD-ROM and more, all for only \$700! When I heard about this the first thing I thought of was a fateful discussion I had with the Neo•Geo rep a few years before. For those who may have forgotten, the Neo•Geo was a \$600 "serious" game machine. The rep wanted to know why I was skeptical about the machine. I told him that the price was my major concern. His response was something I'll never forget as long as I live. He said, "Rich, you don't understand, at this price point we don't have any competition." I said, "Forgive me, but at that price point you also don't have any market. Why don't you just charge \$10,000 for it and then you'll have no competition for the next few centuries." The 3DO people have slowly started to learn from history as can be seen from their continually lowering price. I just feel sorry for all the people who bought into this last year. Thankfully,



there weren't too many of them.

The point is that somehow, otherwise bright people in our industry sometimes seem to lose their bearings and forget about the actual marketplace. They forget that most families have bigger concerns than gaming and thus aren't likely to spend more than \$200 on a product. They'll rationalize this by saying that it's more than a game machine but they're kidding themselves. The major market here is for kids, and parents, by and large, are not going to spend \$500 or more for a glorified game machine no matter what else it can do.

Sega recently released the 32X and frankly, I really like the thinking behind it. Most of the 18 million Genesis owners are truly ready for the "Next Level." The 32X gets them there without the hassle of dealing with a new incompatible system and having to buy all new peripherals. I think it's best to think of the 32X as a whole new game machine that happens to play all your old games. That's a bargain at \$159. But what about the other 32-Bit Sega machine, the Saturn?

Suddenly we hear the Saturn is being completely redesigned. That's great as I'm sure it's being done to get the price down, so hand it to Sega for heading history. However, Sega now seems so concerned about the perception that the 32X is just a stop-gap until the Saturn, that they're now taking a company line that could ultimately cause them trouble.

I've now talked with several Sega reps and publishers who have abruptly started suggesting that the Saturn isn't a typical game machine and isn't even aimed at the same market as the Genesis and 32X. Sounds a lot like another CD-i product to me. The problem is that if they continue selling this theory to people, many will start to believe it. Then, only one of two things can happen.

If Sega has somehow lost its mind and believes the Saturn is some new hybrid, then we'll all have another CD-i/3DO to deal with and Sega will lose a lot of the respect they've now earned. On the other hand, if Sega releases the Saturn and then changes its tune they're going to have a large contingent of 32X owners who will feel cheated. If Sega really wants to win in this situation I have a suggestion. Get behind the 32X completely. While you're redesigning the Saturn build in 32X compatibility and don't mess with the controllers we already have. When you finally release it down the line, Sega fans from all circles will gladly slide right into it. Of course that's contingent upon the assumption that Sega has kept up on history and remembers the price points that work.

.....
by **Rich Heimlich**
Heimlich is a noted authority on multimedia issues.
The views expressed are his own and may not reflect the views of EG.

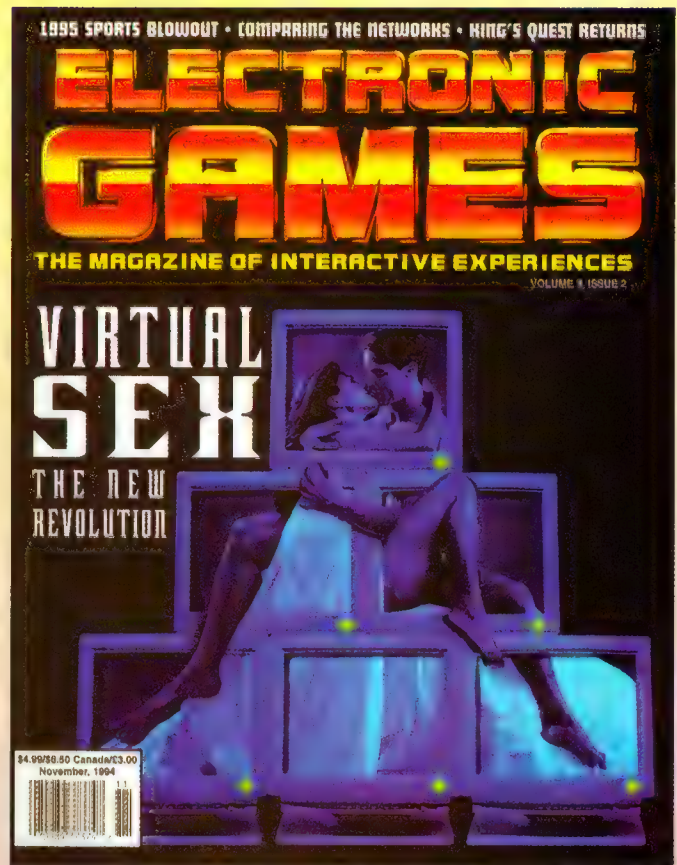
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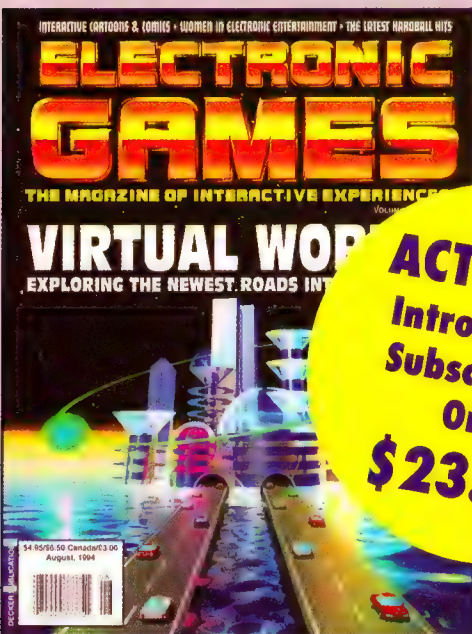
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DEALS

TCI Buys Into Acclaim

When two of the biggest giants in their respective industries want to get together, I guess they just do it. TCI and Acclaim decided to do just that.

What a deal! Let's look at the arrangement, the background of the companies and maybe guess at what might be going on.

Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI) has agreed to buy 10 percent of the mega-giant software publisher Acclaim Entertainment for about \$76 million. TCI and Acclaim also agreed to form a joint venture to produce interactive entertainment software for cable networks. The venture will also pursue the promotion of a new standard broadband network game platform to be incorporated into advanced, set-top boxes. Under terms of the agreement, TCI will purchase about 4.3 million shares of Acclaim in exchange for TCI stock and/or cash. The new company will be a limited partnership in which Acclaim will own 65 percent and TCI will own a 35 percent share.

John Malone stated, "We think that competitive games of skill over broadband networks will represent a major new segment of our business." His company believes games will be a "major locomotive" into the world of interactive television.

Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. is America's #1 independent maker of cartridge entertainment software. The company was founded in 1986 to design and sell video games, mostly for Nintendo's 8-Bit system. Acclaim went public in 1988 and two years later acquired LJN Toys from MCA. In 1989 Acclaim began to make software for Nintendo's Game Boy, and in 1992 it entered the Sega game market with the purchase of Mirrorsoft, a European designer for Sega's Genesis and Game Gear systems. Although Acclaim lost \$3 million that year over a failed television venture, it benefited from a price war when both Nintendo and Sega lowered their game system prices. It has another advantage: Acclaim makes its own cartridges instead of buying them from Nintendo.

Acclaim's *Mortal Kombat II* release real-



ized retail sales of more than \$50 million in its first week of distribution. Co-Chairman and CEO Gregory Fischbach is in his early 50s and gets a salary that would buy over 32,000 *Mortal Kombat II* games a year.

CEO John C. Malone runs a company that is *Mortal Kombat II* in real life. **TeleCommunications, Inc.** (TCI) is the world's largest cable systems operator, and serves millions of subscribers. TCI owns a significant amount of the Discovery Channel plus a large voting interest in Turner Broadcasting.

In 1992 TCI began to invest in technologies, such as fiber optics and digital compression, that will increase the number of channels available to cable customers and allow the company to compete in the pay-per-view market and with regional telephone companies.

What do we gamers get out of this deal? As the gaming industry goes through its digitrends™ in the digiverse™ we will see a progression from CD-ROM to video servers. Just look at the success of the Sega Channel test: everyone wants to play games over their phone/cable line. AT&T didn't buy the Imagination Network just to sit idle. This is a huge market!

The joint venture to produce interactive entertainment software for cable networks will be extremely successful. As the cable and telco interests converge on each other's space, games will be available in depth and size unimaginable only five years ago. We'll see communications and game playing between homes and countries. It will not be unusual to play individuals from any location on Earth.

The promotion of a new standard, broadband network game platform for advanced set-top boxes is the most interesting part of this announcement. With relationships forming very closely between John Malone and Bill Gates, we must keep our eyes wide open.

If Microsoft incorporates Marvel into Windows '95 and creates a new on-line system used by millions of new on-line customers, the landscape will continue to change.

The best thing about all of this is that we as gamers have nothing to lose and can only benefit from this deal. At worst, Greg and John can buy all the games that their competition can no longer sell and still have some money left over to call home.

.....
by Barry Friedman
President, International Computer Group

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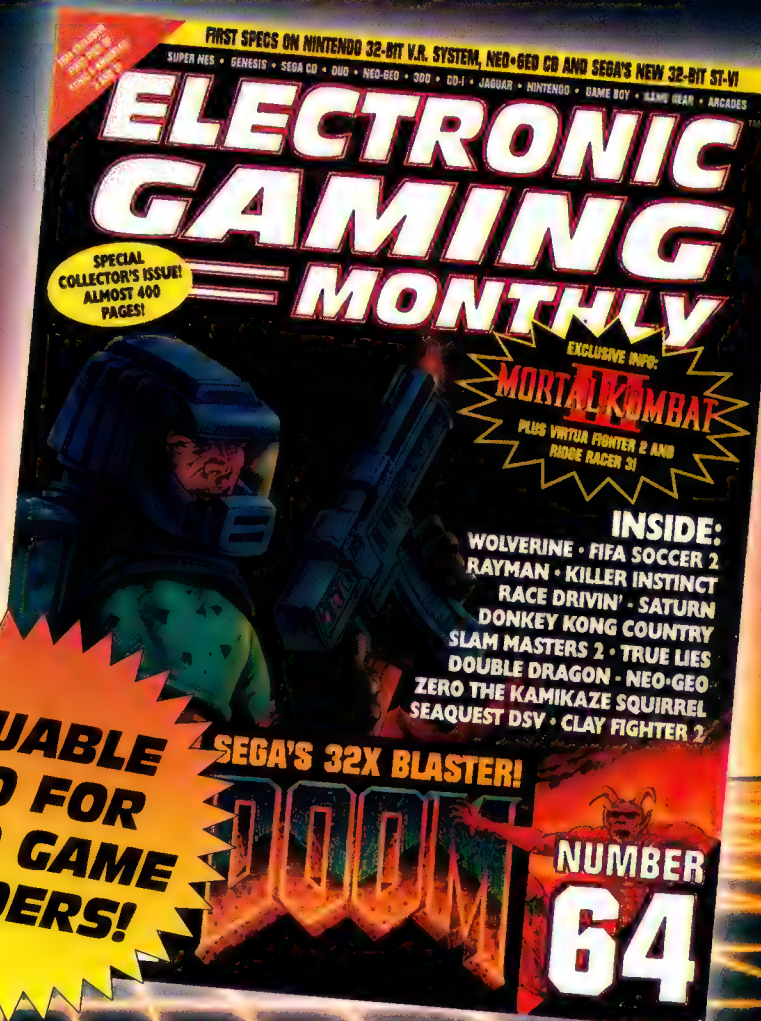
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THE KUNKEL REPORT

TBS & THE SONIC HEDGEHOG

I've performed many valiant acts in my time as a game journalist. I've flown in a biplane, and testified against Atari and Nintendo in court cases as an expert witness. I even played through the entirety of **Man Enough** just to make sure I tested all the "action" games. But never have I had to endure anything like TBS' horrendous *Cybermania '94*, the first televised attempt to integrate electronic games and the tired TV award show format. Well, since I had to watch it, it is only fair that you, my readers, should have to at least read about it. I did the hard part, after all.

Traditionally, when TV attempts to deal with interactive games, the results are not good (as anyone who suffered through MTV's "Rock the Rock" Sega-on-Alcatraz promo event can attest). But *Cybermania '94* was so offensive, so blathering, so downright ignorant that it deserves a more detailed scrutiny.

From the collection of dazed, third-rate "celebrities" who handed out the incomprehensible awards—rarely, if ever, mentioning a platform, publisher, or development group—to the glib know-nothings who hosted the promotional remotes, at places like Virtua World (a casino-based Las Vegas arcade that thinks lining up two dozen **Virtua Racing** sitdown coin-ops and running them in competition is virtual reality) this event was a disaster. The constant huckstering was bad enough, but the tie-ins! For example, the show was staged at Universal City, so we were forced to endure a pathetic skit involving Leslie Nielsen wandering into the Wild West Stunt Man area of the theme park. Then, seemingly because it was on TBS, they hustled out a pair of WCW wrestlers (Turner owns the promotion) for a skit that ended with the grapplers tangled up with a pair of midgets.

But the worst thing about this dark night for interactive gaming was its amazing anonymity. When industry people (who collected almost every award) such as Brian Fargo appeared on stage to pick up their glittering prizes, we weren't even told who they were, or why they were picking up the trophies. It got so bad by the end that when **Mortal Kombat** won the audience poll for "Best Game" (of all time? of the past half decade? What, guys, what?) the prize was apparently collected by Acclaim, with no reference to Williams or the game's creators, Ed Boon and John Tobias.

Some of the show's more memorable moments included:

- Co-host Leslie Nielsen plugging in a computer which then exploded, blackening the face of a Hillary Clinton impersonator.
- Nielsen giving a rating of "three thumbs up" to a game he called "The Sonic Hedgehog" because he "likes gardens" (oh-kay).
- The Best Simulation/Strategy Game category included the PC-CD version of **Sim City**, **Dune II**, **Flight Simulator 5**, **Castles II** and ... **Forever Growing Garden?**
- The Best Music category didn't include any game music, just Peter Gabriel's **Explorer**, **Video Jam** (a music-making product significantly inferior to **Rock, Rap, & Roll** and several other similar programs), the Prince/TAFKAP CD, **Uptown Blues** (a dbase of urban blues!) and the excellent Residents' creation, **Freak Show**. But where were the Fat Man, Tallarico, Neuromantic, etc.?
- **Caesar's World of Boxing** inexplicably beat out **NBA Jam**, **FIFA Soccer** and **NHL '94** as Best Sports Game.
- Nielsen announced washed-up '60s left-over Peter Max as "the official artist of the info superhighway."

• There were awards for such absurd (or premature) categories as Best Actor and Actress in a game (which included a bimbo from **Man Enough** who only appeared in digitized still photos!), and Best Comedy program (how desperate were they? **Dennis Miller's That's News To Me** got nominated).

There were some nuggets—including a nice filler on hackers—but the writing, performances, direction and overall production values were horrible. Cues were flubbed, bits went nowhere and the celebs looked dazed.

Even worse, however, was the air of butt-kissing that hung over the entire affair. I yield to no one in my admiration for Brian Fargo, but Interplay was mentioned much too often for comfort, and Philips came off as being more important to the industry than Sega, Nintendo, 3DO and Atari combined, winning a ridiculous number of nominations and awards.

One day, gamers will have an awards show. There will be categories and game world celebrities and maybe even selections that make sense. This, however, wasn't it.

.....
by Bill Kunkel

ELECTRONIC g a m e s

JANUARY, 1995

VOLUME 3: NUMBER 4

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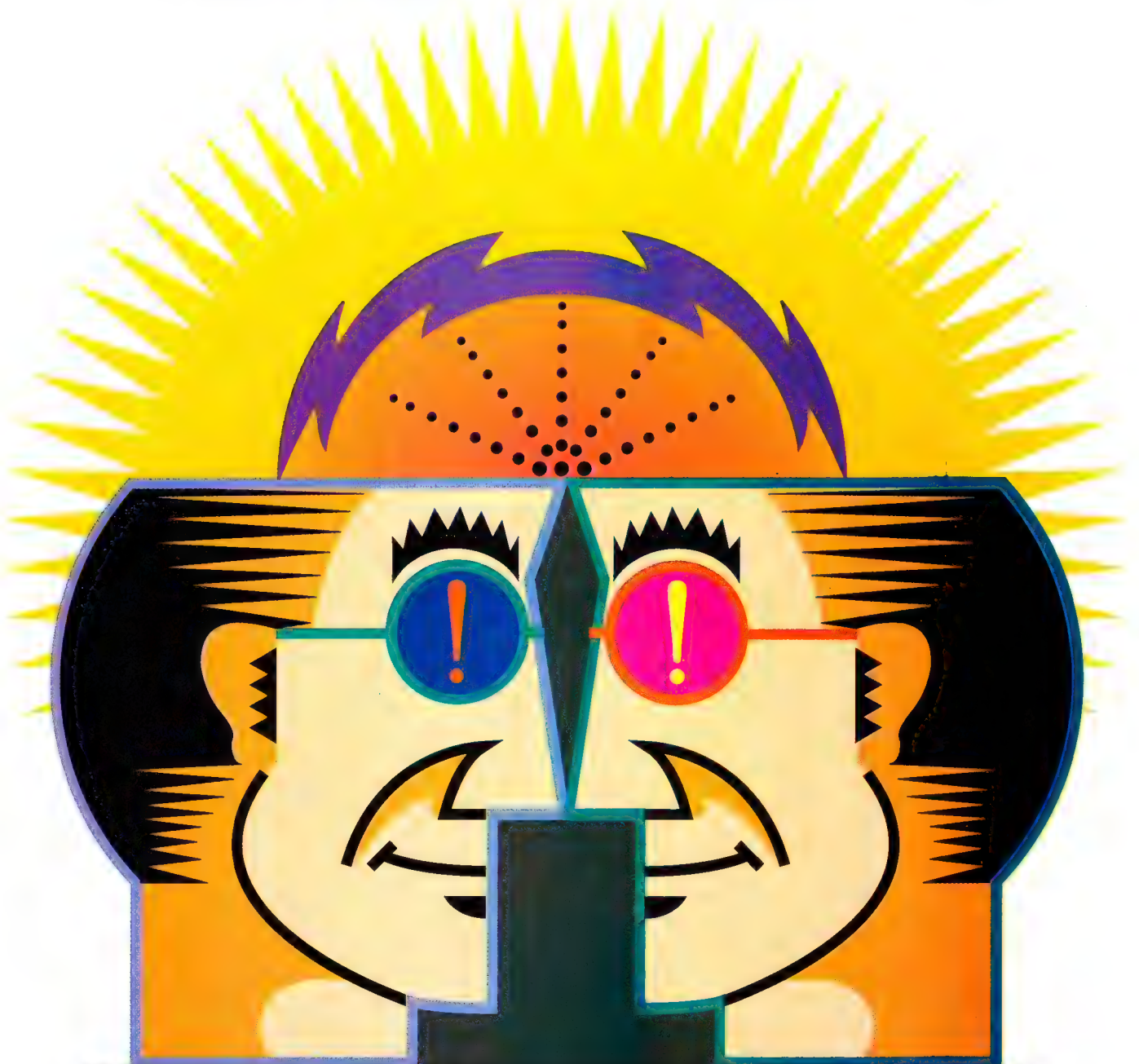
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
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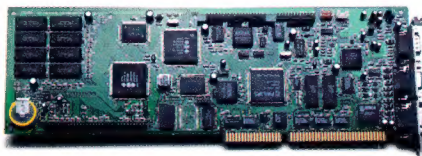
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