

REPETITIVE STRESS SYNDROME • PENN & TELLER: SMOKE AND MIRRORS • THE LATEST FROM WCES

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

ELECTRONIC™ g a m e s

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6

EVOLUTION OR EXTINCTION?

WILL THE
TRANSITION
FROM 16-BIT
SYSTEMS MARK
THE END OF GAME
CONSOLES, OR WILL
THE INDUSTRY'S
NEXT PLATFORMS
BE HOTTER
THAN EVER?

PLUS...
NEW FROM NINTENDO,
VIRTUAL BOY ARRIVES!

\$4.99/\$6.50 Canada/£3.00
March, 1995

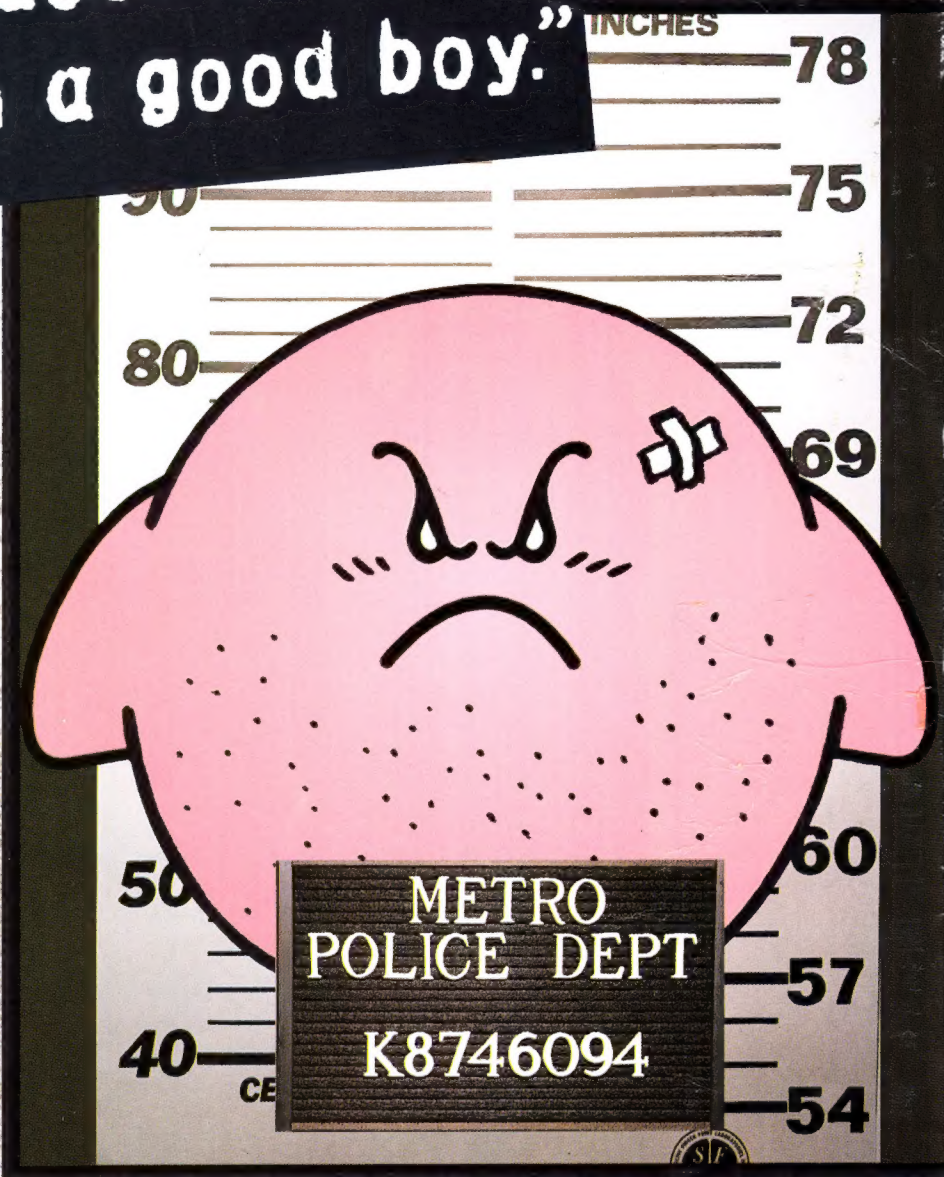


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"He used to be such a good boy."

Kirby's back with a couple of real brutes for Super NES®.

Sad. One day you're cute 'n cuddly. The next, you're burying your opponents and spitting on your enemies. Who's to blame? Bad parenting? One too many sitcoms? Either way, the mutant marshmallow is



now on 16-bit in two games. So prepare to be toasted. Kirby's Avalanche™: The chain-reaction puzzle game where saving your skin means burying your opponent in boulders.



Connect blobs on your side, then watch your bud get buried.

Then facing some of the nastiest names in the business—like Waddle Dee and Squishy.

(OK, so "The Mangler" and "Scarface" they ain't.)



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They're at it again, this time invading cyberspace with their new game *Smoke and Mirrors* by Absolute.



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"Triad is a truly awesome game."* But don't take our word for it.

RISE OF THE TRIAD

D A R K W A R

"Rise of the Triad is sure to have every DOOM freak in the world lining up just to drool all over it."

— Interactive Entertainment*

"Rise of the Triad provides everything an action gamer could want."

— Computer Game Review

"This game is the most multiplayer-friendly product we've seen.

DeathMatch will never be the same again."

— Computer Gaming World



• Taunt your opponents with RemoteRidicule during 11-player network games.



• An industry first: Violence Level Adjustment with password-only get gore if you want



• Die as one of five unique characters (male & female) on over thirty levels of action

This is the game you've been waiting for. An all-out blast-fest. The unremitting blood and fire rampage of your most twisted nightmares. With ten incredibly vicious weapons, you annihilate the enemy. Your machine gun blasts holes in the walls. Sparks and metal fly as you blow apart everything in sight. Mass destruction has never been this fun



Created by Apogee Software, Ltd. and distributed by FormGen Inc. 7641 E. Gray Rd, Scottsdale, AZ, 85260 (800) 263-2390
Available on disk and CD. Supports serial, modem, and 11-player network (individual or team) play.
(body bags not included)

POWER ON

The Adult Gaming Bill of Rights



Magazine editors love to tell the rest of the world how to live. Pick up any of the other gaming publications and you're sure to find them stuffed with snide critiques about what everyone from Atari to WordPerfect is doing wrong. Twenty/twenty hindsight makes everybody an expert.

Being the consumers' watchdog is a vital part of the media's mission. As important as they are, print ads and TV commercials tell only one side of the story: the one with the smiley face plastered all over it. It is up to journalists to separate the facts from the claims by injecting objectivity.

Funny thing, though. Those same magazine editors seldom show the same degree of sensitivity about how *they* serve the electronic gaming public.

Steve Harris wisely limits my editorial to one page, so don't expect a litany of current magazines' sins. I wouldn't dignify their transgressions in these pages, even if I had the room.

Our editorial staff is committed to making **Electronic Games** the best resource for intelligent and sophisticated gamers. We don't have time for sniping, juvenile jokes and other unprofessional stuff, and we don't expect you to pay good money to read that kind of tripe. It's hard enough to cover all the amazing things happening in electronic gaming without wasting space that way.

Rather than talk about what others are doing wrong, I want to tell you about what we are trying to do right. In short, I want to discuss our editorial standards and practices.

The first, and most important, point is that we review no game before its time. Imagine *The New York Times Review of Books* slapping a review of a novel's first draft on its front page. That's ridiculous, of course. *The Times* would never perpetuate such a

disgrace—and **EG** won't, either. Our Hotline and In Progress columns, as well as the numerous preview features, provide a blue sky look ahead, but the review sections are inviolate. We won't phony up a review that doesn't accurately reflect the game just to pretend we've gotten something first.

The same goes for hardware. We've tracked the Expert Platforms right from the drawing board, but we don't rate systems that aren't finalized. When you read a story about the Saturn or Ultra 64 here, it's the up-to-the-minute truth, not an excursion into science fantasy.

EG readers have the right to read facts, not rumors or daydreams. JJ Barrel's Whispers from Cyberspace has stories so fresh they're not even in our news section, but he doesn't write without hard evidence.

The adult gamer has the right to objective reporting. There's enough hype in electronic gaming already without shilling for pet companies and furthering hidden agendas. We don't trade our covers to software publishers for ad support, and no editor of this magazine is permitted to own stock in any electronic gaming company to ensure that this magazine always puts its readers ahead of

every consideration.

Adult readers have the right to expect stories free of hyperbole and exaggeration. No "Game of the Century" crapola here. It's unfair to sing the praises of a new system one month and bury it two months later. Our editorial aim is a balanced view that brings forward the good and bad points of every game and platform.

Finally, adult gamers have the right to have their opinions heard, respected and reflected in the magazine they support. That's why **EG** doesn't just hand out awards as a goodwill gesture and instead lets you decide the best games.

That's why we have an electronic mail address—ElecGames@aol.com. I read every e-letter and reply to most of them before passing them to Feedback editor Ross Chamberlain.

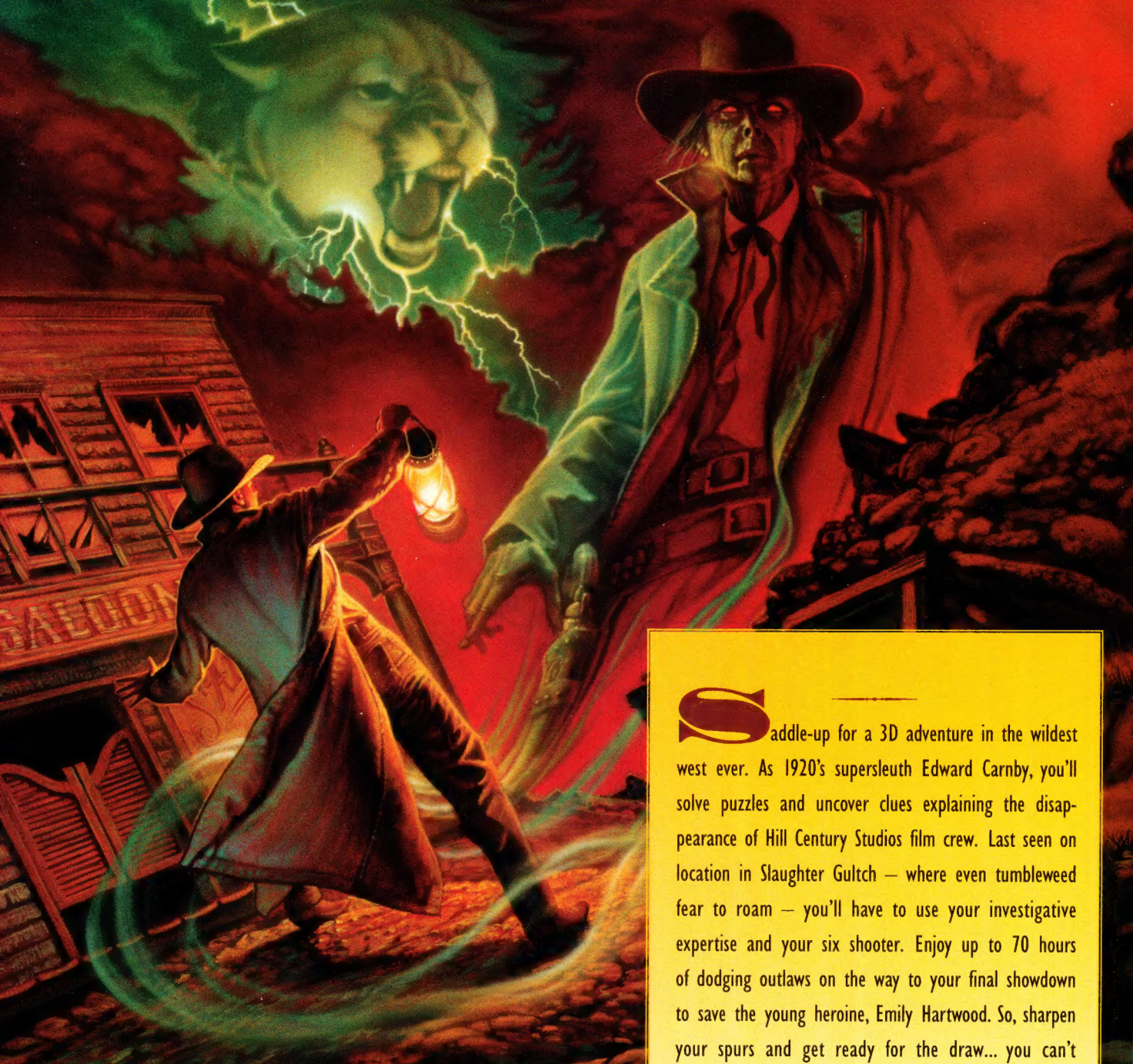
Adult gamers have many calls on their time. For that reason, they write to magazines and fill out surveys less frequently than teenagers. Don't let adult gamers become the Silent Majority.

We've got rights.

.....
by Arnie Katz

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

AT HIGH-NOON THERE'S ONLY ROOM FOR ONE...



Saddle-up for a 3D adventure in the wildest west ever. As 1920's supersleuth Edward Carnby, you'll solve puzzles and uncover clues explaining the disappearance of Hill Century Studios film crew. Last seen on location in Slaughter Gulch — where even tumbleweed fear to roam — you'll have to use your investigative expertise and your six shooter. Enjoy up to 70 hours of dodging outlaws on the way to your final showdown to save the young heroine, Emily Hartwood. So, sharpen your spurs and get ready for the draw... you can't imagine how wild the west can get.



Your Wild West adventure is now available on PC CD-ROM.
It's Windows compliant and Sound Blaster compatible.
For more information, call: 800-443-3386.



BATTELMORPH™ This much-anticipated 3-D sequel to Cybermorph has a killer new twist. You can seek out new worlds underwater and underground. Available 1st quarter.



BRETT HULL HOCKEY™ With awesome digitized graphics and a real-time 3-D rink, you'll feel every slapshot, save and humiliating slam into the boards. Available 2nd quarter.



DRAGON'S LAIR® Dirk's back, only this time he'll be fighting dragons in your home. It'll take the Jaguar's raw 64-bit power to the max. Available 1st quarter.



HIGHLANDER™ Based on the hit movies and TV series, Highlander will take your swordsmanship to the 64-bit level. Available 1st quarter.



ROBINSON'S REQUIEM™ Imprisoned on an alien planet, you either escape or die. You'll cover 3 miles of 3-D terrain as you fight off starvation, predators and insanity. Available 2nd quarter.



BLUE LIGHTNING™ You're in an F-18 battling a renegade general. Can you handle precision flying and stomach-wrenching dogfights or do you need your mother? Available 1st quarter.



CREATURE SHOCK™ You're on a mission to find the remains of a lost ship on the near-dead Planet Earth. 3-D graphics and eerie special effects add to the chills. Available 2nd quarter.



How can we possibly make the 64-bit Jaguar more powerful? Attach an Atari double-speed CD player. It's a lot like attaching an atom bomb to an F-14. We're talking explosive power that no other CD-ROM combination can match. Just piggyback this 790-meg monster onto your Jaguar and watch your TV come alive with insane true color, movie-like images and CD-quality stereo sound.



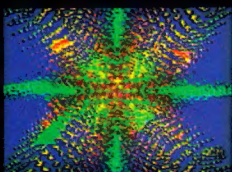
DEMOLITION MAN™ Get ready for an interactive adventure with live action footage of Stallone and Snipes. Now your sappy dreams of movie stardom can be a reality. Available 1st quarter.

The most powerful game system in the world just got a 790 Meg TUNNE-UP.



VIRTUAL LIGHT MACHINE™

Watch the beats of your CD's come to life in a pulsating collage of 65,000 mind-blowing colors. Or create your own cosmic light show at the touch of a button.



If our Interactive CD games don't rearrange your brain cells, the built-in Virtual Light Machine will. Throw on your favorite CD, and watch the music morph, contort, and pulsate in a psychedelic light show your ex-hippie parents may even appreciate. So check out the new CD player for the Jaguar. It'll crank the torque up to nuclear proportions.

\$149

[CD player comes fully loaded with everything but a Jaguar.]

JAGUAR™ 64-BIT
 MULTIMEDIA PLAYER **CD**
DO+THE MATH

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FEEDBACK

Bigger Book or Better Buy?

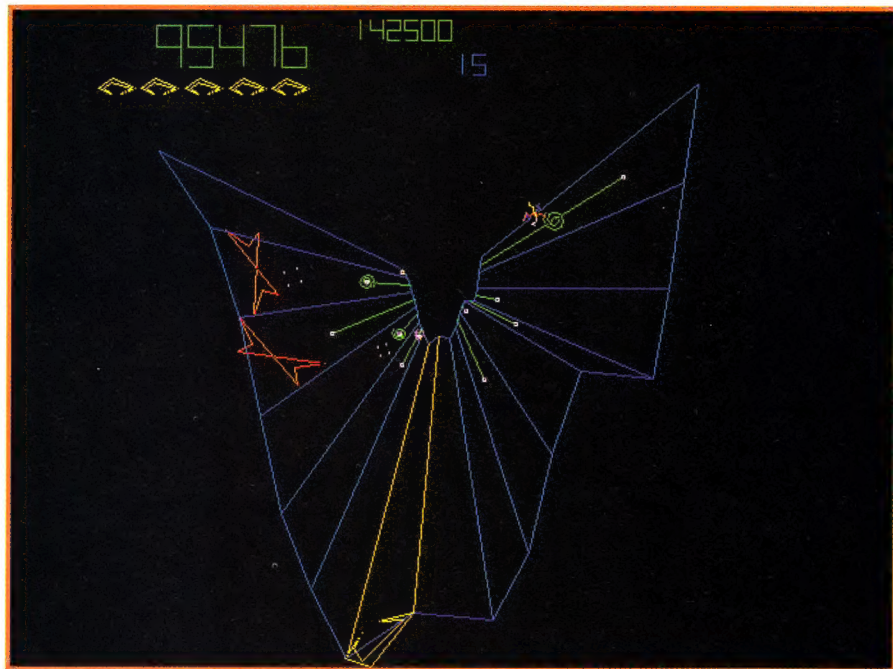
After bypassing your magazine for more than a year in favor of the other thicker, more colorful magazines for the same price, I recently purchased your December 1994 issue to read the cover article on "Solving the System Dilemma." Once I read the entire magazine I was very impressed with how much actual reading content is in your pages. Maybe I'm just conditioned by the pages and pages of useless filler photos and inane picture blurbs, but I spent more time reading *Electronic Games* than the others two or three times as thick. Maybe I was too hasty in giving you up ... you think?

Dave Neely
daveneely@aol.com

We think. But now that you're with us, Dave, we hope you'll stick around. We do try to give you more word-count for your wampum. Here's somebody who had a slightly different perspective on our larger holiday issues...

Hooked on Classics

I cringed when I picked up a recent issue of the newly enlarged *EG*, anticipating that your expansion was a result of the number of advertisements overtaking the number of articles. I was relieved to find that *EG*'s overall content remained the same. Unlike your competitors, whose entire publications read more like Nintendo or Sega advertisements, you continue to include articles on the business and human interest sides of the hobby. You even dared to announce the Virtual Sex articles on your cover instead of hiding them in the back pages of the magazine [Nov. 94]. Without approving or disapproving of these games, you recognized their existence and popularity. Please



continue to treat your readers as adults.

I also enjoy the *Relics* column and your references to classic games from the early years. Very few magazines treat this segment of our hobby with any respect, choosing instead to ridicule the primitive graphics of the old systems and games. Such "newer-must-be-better" writers ignore the heritage of the hobby they are supposedly advancing. As a long-time *EG* reader I believe you have done an excellent job of recognizing the important contributions of the past without dwelling in it.

Why should interest in classic video games be ignored? Classics aren't ignored in other forms of entertainment such as film, books and music. Thousands of people enjoy movies such as *Casablanca* and

The Wizard of Oz, the writings of Mark Twain and Shakespeare and compositions by Beethoven and Elvis, even though all these works were created long ago. No one suggests that films, books and musicians can only be enjoyed by people who happened to be around when the original work was introduced, or that these works should be unavailable today simply because the original medium is no longer in use.

Consider the music of the Beatles—still selling strong nearly 25 years after the group broke up. The vinyl records on which their music was released have gone the way of the eight-track and reel-to-reel tapes. Would anyone argue that this music should be lost forever because vinyl records are no longer being made? Of course not. As new mediums are created, old films are being restored on videotape, old books are being reprinted on acid-free paper and old music is being re-released on compact disc. Thus the "classics" continue to survive and will surely be enjoyed by generations whose grandparents weren't even born when the original work was created.

Letter Contest

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

Tom Kite



Fuzzy Zoeller



Craig Stadler



Brad Faxon



Lee Janzen



David Love III



Jeff Sluman



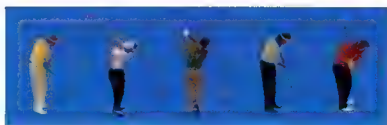
Bruce Lietzke



Mark O'Meara



All the biggest names in golf. Including yours.

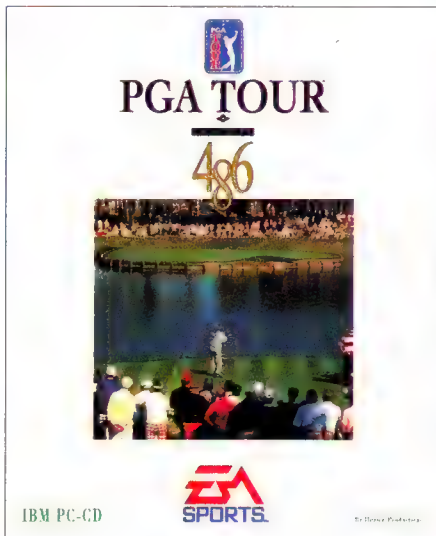


The Swings: Each pro was filmed then digitized into the game. Drives, fairway irons, chips, sandblasts and putts are seamlessly overlaid onto majestic TPC courses.



The Pros: Go head to head against them, or step into the shoes of 9 different featured pros. Listen to their tips. Learn about their greatest moments.

The 486 Technology: The new Target Arc™ System enables you to visualize your shot and control ball spin before you swing. A snap-around view, multiple camera angles, multimedia video, digitized speech, and a quick redraw rate combine to make the most realistic golf simulation ever.



You're paired with Stadler, trying to catch Kite on the back 9 of Sawgrass. First you made the cut. Now you're in the money and have a shot at a PGA TOUR® victory. PGA TOUR® Golf 486 has the pros, the pressure, the courses, the yips.



The Formats: The ultimate challenge is tournament play. But stroke, match, and Skins are options.



The Courses: Play the most diverse and challenging of the famous TPC courses: Sawgrass, Summerlin and River Highlands. Constructed from the actual blueprints, the courses are so real that players can actually feel the different course personalities.



So it should be with video games. While not all of the old video games can be considered classics, there are enough out there worthy of being preserved. Just as films and music have a direct influence on works that follow, there would have been no *Zelda* without an **Adventure**, no **Mortal Kombat** without a **Karate Champ**, no Nintendo without Atari, etc.

Is there a market for classic games? Consider the rash of fanzines covering the Vectrex, ColecoVision, Intellivision and Atari 2600 systems. Consider the popularity of **Microsoft Arcade**, a PC program featuring coin-op classics such as **Missile Command**, **Battlezone**, **Centipede** and **Tempest**. Consider also the titles of recent hit games—**Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure**, **Donkey Kong Country**, **Space Invaders**, **Tempest 2000**, **Pac-Man 2: The New Adventures** and so on. Rereleases or updates of classic games in new formats would not only appeal to “old-timers” but also to kids who have never seen anything like them. Bored with the latest punching-kicking-fighting machine? Return to those thrilling days of yesteryear and jump a frog across a road, change colors on a pyramid of cubes, joust on an ostrich...

The emergence of CD-ROM as a storage medium provides us with a great opportunity to keep the classics alive. Think of how many 4K Atari 2600 games could fit on a single CD-ROM for the Jaguar or Genesis. Intellivision games, ColecoVision games, NES games, Sega Master System games—all of these could remain available to players for years to come, no matter how far system technology advances.

So, thank you, **EG**, for recognizing the value of what has gone before. I hope that the industry will come to realize the importance of preserving the classics for the next generation, rather than striving to alienate the owners of the latest obsolete system. More memory, more colors and better sound doesn't necessarily lead to a better system or a better game. As a favorite magazine of mine always says, “The play's the thing...”

Mark Androvich
Folsom, CA

We could hardly have put it better, Mark! For that, you win the STD controller this month. We did get some unhappy comments on our Virtual Sex feature (one reader inexplicably decried it for its “sexually explicit material”!), but on the whole the response was favorable. We might note that it's unlikely you'll find too many compositions by Elvis in the repertoire, and there's been a

continuing specialty market for vinyl records that's actually seen a recent upswing. Other than that, we appreciate the kudos and insights into the giants on whose shoulders we stand today.

The Hollywood Toll

Okay, so you did another Hollywood and Gaming article. My barf bag was gripped tightly. Hollywood's invasion of video gaming is not a totally positive thing. Remember last time they did this? Yeah, you know, back when 20th Century Fox was hyping Atari 2600 games based on movies like *9 to 5* and *Porky's*? It was not a pretty sight.

A lot of these huge media conglomerates still have the idea that no matter how dreadful the game is, the license alone will save it. As a result we're getting a flood of substandard and totally unnecessary titles based on a popular, or not so popular, license. Also, a lot of these Hollywood or otherwise movie-style games consisting of 99.44 percent FMV and .56 percent game have no more play value than fooling around with your VCR remote control does. I want to play a game, not watch it. Why spend millions of dollars on sets and actors? I'd rather see that money go into the actual game design.

What's good about the Hollywood invasion is that it brings a lot of capital into the market that can finance smaller, more creative, development teams. Some of the media conglomerates are doing it right. They are investing their money into promising development teams instead of cranking out cookie-cutter schlock by themselves.

Another sign of this Hollywood invasion is that television atrocity known as *Cybermania '94*. Bill Kunkel was absolutely correct in his remarks about this ill-conceived and deceptive awards show. The thing is, we may never see a “serious” awards show for the video gaming industry. Well, on the standard TV networks anyway.

Cybermania '94 represents everything that's wrong with the popular media's perspective on video games. “The academy” went nuts over your basic Hollywood FMV watch-'em-ups and ignored the vast majority of innovative titles that came out in 1994. They also didn't take the event seriously. The award receivers went unidentified, the categories were poorly chosen, the nominees were often completely undeserving and the



whole attitude toward the affair was just plain sickening.

Well, here's your Hollywood invasion. They helped destroy the market over a decade ago, and it looks like we may see a bit of a rerun if we're not careful.

Ralph Barbagallo
rbarbaga@cs.uml.edu

Seems like the variety of CD-based games represented by your “99.44 percent FMV” description may be among a new category of entertainment where what's required of the player is more of the deft touch just there and see-what-happens than the constant bash 'em and crash 'em of most video games, or the puzzle-to-pass death traps of your average RPG. You may not care for them; it'll be interesting to see if there's a sufficient market to make them a viable category. Evolution in action, Ralph!

There is a tendency for the popular media to treat the whole interactive entertainment industry as a passing fad or a niche genre, like science-fiction and horror films. (Have you ever caught that awards show hosted by Robert “Freddy Krueger” Englund that shows up every so often in open time slots on non-network affiliated stations?) Chances are, there's a degree of rivalry involved. There are serious awards offered by the organized fans of some areas, such as the Hugos and Nebula awards in science fiction, the Edgars for mysteries and Silver Spur awards for Westerns. It might soon be time for something similar in electronic entertainment, à la the Software Publishers Association's Awards but more specific to our part of the industry.

Meanwhile, thanks to all who wrote. And please, you who sent e-mail, let's have your snail mail addresses too; you might win our contest! Write to:

Feedback % Electronic Games
330 South Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107
Send e-mail to: **elecgames@aol.com**

What are you waiting for?

"This game kicks a hell of a lot of ass!"

— Fire Boy1 - AMERICA ONLINE

"With the six-degrees of freedom, true 3-D game engine, Descent has set the new standard that all other 1st person shoot-em-ups must now live up to."

— Jon Salaga, Compuserve 72712,450

"Descent Kicks BUTT!"

— Rick Johnson, Compuserve 74431,1624

Sensory overload in 360° 3D.

Welcome to Descent™ - 30 levels of the most mind-bending, stomach-churning action game ever. Featuring true 3-Dimensional worlds with light source shading, texture mapping, 3-D morphing, directional sound effects and sizzling music, this is technology taken to the limit.

You begin deep below the surface of Lunar Base I where an unknown alien race has taken over the chasm of the Post-Terran Mining Corporation. Lunge straight down mine shafts, twist around never-ending tunnels and fight your way past robotic menaces in an environment that's truly 360° 3-D...move up, move down, shoot everything everywhere. Hang onto your senses (and your lunch) as you drop straight down mine shafts on a ride that'll leave you spinning.

And what's the good of losing your mind if you can't share the experience with your friends? Descent invites you and your buddies to dive into the action together with head-to-head combat and cooperative two-player modem and eight-player network support.

Challenge yourself and experience what everyone's talking about!

"Wow! At last! A true Doom KILLER!!!!!!"

— Patrick Simmons, Compuserve 72017,2374

"The nasty computer game with graphics that change as if the player is moving in three dimensions."

— The Wall Street Journal

"Descent is an incredible game. Descent is to Doom as Doom was to Wolfenstein."

— Al Hunt, Compuserve



"The weapons are awesome, the game play is awesome, the motion sickness is awesome..."

— Eric Rose, Compuserve 71221,2660

"Cool game, just need to find my Dramamine to play it."

— Mike Hulen, Compuserve 74023,3004

"Holy Bat farts, Batman!... I have never experienced an enemy intelligence anywhere NEAR the way these robots act. They peek, they fire, they chase you, they take cover, they wait."

— Marty Peralta, Compuserve 74147,33

"Descent is superb."

— Apogee

"The sensation of speed is amazing, and the 3D texture mapped graphics make this game a genuine joy to behold."

— PC Gamer

"It's Doom with a twist, a turn, and a gravity free flip."

— Computer Gaming World

"Played it ... and I have one thing to say. Wow."

— Sir Ryck AMERICA ONLINE

"If you still have Doom loaded on your HD you're just wasting space."

— Big Joe d, AMERICA ONLINE

"Fantastic graphics, incredible 3-D animation, support for modems and LANs, music, you name it. The best I have ever seen."

— Jon Yardney, Compuserve 70563,2311



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Interplay™

BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

Interplay Productions
17922 Fitch Avenue
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 969-GAME

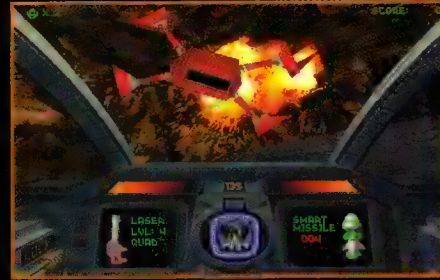
Coming March 17th to a store near you. For IBM and compatibles.



30 twisting levels full of mechanical monsters and hidden secrets.



Highly advanced A.I. with creatures that plot, wait and ambush from all sides.



Explosive 3D, multidirectional sound effects and blazing musical scores.

DESCENT™

CYBERWATCH

Microsoft Meets the Virtual Vatican

Thanks to an absolutely brilliant hoax which roared through the cyberspace at warp speed, many jacked-in members of our cynical society actually believed that a deal had been struck between Bill Gates' mammoth Microsoft, Inc. and the Vatican!

The hysterical press release which flooded through every crack in the net was broad enough to clue in any reader with a three-digit IQ that it was a rib, but amazingly enough, in a nation where people tend to swallow anything they absorb through the media, multitudes believed, and the story even made the national news.

The now-famous bogus press statement included the news that the Vatican would receive a prime piece of virtual real estate, the Pope would go on-line, and—in the most incredible flourish of all—two members of Microsoft's Board of Directors were to be granted admission to the College of Cardinals (the highest organized body within the Roman Catholic Church and the electors of new popes).

Once the rumor mill got churning, word spread that the mythical merger would allow users to do everything from taking a virtual tour of the Vatican Art Gallery to purchasing indulgences on-line.

Subsequent japes involved everything from dubbing Intel's 586 chip the "RePentium" to nicknaming Microsoft founder Bill "Pearly" Gates.

—Various Sources

"Midway Mfg.'s **Killer Instinct** debuts at #1 on this month's upright chart. With some exceptions, chart reporting operators who have it out rated it a 10 (meaning power-bucks). But this fighter has also raised the hackles of a lot of trade folks who alternately dislike its \$5K retail price range, its



graphic violence and also fear its future appearance on the home screen may prematurely crimp earning.

"**Killer Instinct** is sort of a 'litmus test' of a high-priced upright with high play appeal on today's market. While one chart reporter called it the 'best revenue producer we have ever seen,' another wrote: 'I won't buy one because there is no way it would pay for itself before going to home video.' Stay tuned."

—*RePlay* (January, '95)

"[Trip] Hawkins [former EA honcho and founder/chairman of 3DO] is a rarity in the uptight game industry—a straight-shooting top executive who actually enjoys the products he sells.... This year, however, there was no hiding the fact that Hawkins' firm is up against the wall—surrounded by enemies and running out of lives. 'The price is right, and the software is in place,' he says. 'If the customers don't buy 3DO this year, they probably never will.'"

—*Time* (Dec. 19, '94)

"I know several people who are addicted

[to computer use],' said futurist Andre Baccard, a physicist and author based at Stanford University in California, where he researches the social impact of technology.

"There are people who, after they work on computers all day ... go home and do it all night long, too,' he added. 'I have met people who belong to a half-dozen computer networks, and they log-on to one after another.

"I think it both encourages and cultivates psychosis in many people,' he said."

—Patrice Gravino, *AP* (Dec. 28, '94)

"[Rather than Bob,] I'm hoping for a program that lets me torture my cartoon computer guide every time the system crashes or gives me a gibberish error message like: 'ERROR 103.529.666—Could not create a hard socket connection from the soft socket connection because I'm not in the mood...'"

—Aaron Cohen, "CES: The Yawn of a New Electronic Era" *Las Vegas New Times* (Jan. 12, '95)

.....
by Bill Kunkel & Laurie Yates

Welcome to Skullkeep...

We haven't eaten in a while.

Dungeon Master II

The Legend of Skullkeep



It's the role of a lifetime. The granddaddy of all role playing games is back... bigger and badder than ever. Introducing Dungeon Master II, a role playing game of epic proportions.

From storm ravaged villages to trap-filled dungeons you'll face creatures and characters that actually think for themselves and react to your actions. You'll encounter



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HOTLINE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Compiled by Joyce Worley
& Ross Chamberlain

CES Glamour Even In The Mud

*Las Vegas Played Host To The Gaming Elite
But CES Left The Entertainment Industry In The Cold Damp Tents*

It's the Big Show, the meeting place for the industry, the place to make a big splash. The Winter Consumer Electronics Show is famed for flash. In January, manufacturers count their holiday profits, designers point proudly to just-released, would-be hits and everyone looks optimistically toward the new year.

The 1995 Winter CES was no exception. Despite the over-reported sag in video game sales, the gaming world is looking toward an exciting year of new platform introductions.

Attendance was up from recent shows. The four-day trade show drew 103,282 attendees and filled over a million square feet of exhibit space.



But the weeklong rainstorms dampened the scene, if not the spirit. Most game companies were again housed in tents, so industry personnel complained bitterly as they slogged through the mud. But the good news circulated that Electronic Industries Association, hosting company

for CES, has arranged to use the Sands Convention Center in 1996, so the gaming community will be in the dry next year.

Not Everything is Roses

Nintendo officially laid the 8-Bit NES system to rest; there was no ceremony, just an announcement that it is finished and there will be no more support.

Popular wisdom says that software makers are in for a rough year if they're still concentrating on 16-Bit video game platforms. (Yet Nintendo is crowing the loudest, since **Donkey Kong Country** was the big seller of '94.)

The Deal Makers

Most software developers and manufacturers spent Winter CES making agreements to support

one or more of the forthcoming new console platforms: Sony's PlayStation, the Sega Saturn or Nintendo's Ultra 64. At Winter CES, the PlayStation seemed to have the lead in numbers of developers, but nonstop back room meetings lined up plenty of support for the U64 and Saturn.

The Platforms

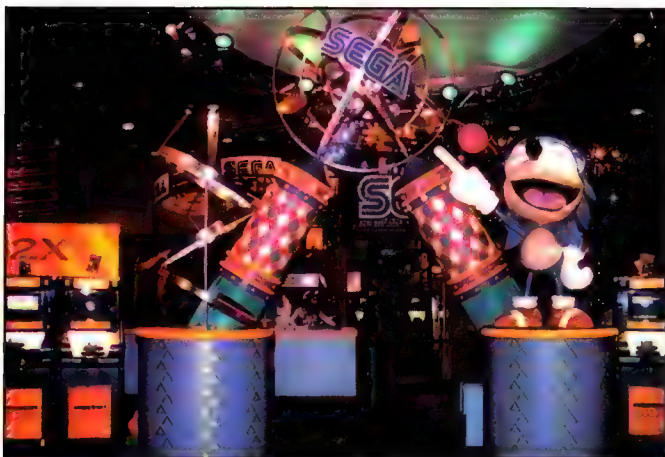
The 3DO looked even stronger than before with an impressive second and third generation lineup of software and plenty of support from third-party developers.

Gold Star introduced their own 3DO machine and announced their entry into the software business.

CD-i continues to gain support as the installed base grows. Philips announced there are now almost 1 million CD-i owners.

Sony unveiled the long-awaited PlayStation in private suites. Sony personnel showed demos of games that highlight the unit's special effects and promised an on-sale date before Christmas. Its cost is not yet set.

Nintendo spokesmen say the Ultra 64 is on schedule for a fall release. According to spokesmen from Silicon Graphics, Inc., who are developing the machine, the



new cartridge system will cost under \$250, and games will be about \$60.

Nintendo also unveiled its Virtual Boy, completed in cooperation with Reflection Technologies, and the line to



look through the goggles was one of the longest at the show. It produces 3-D images using red figures against a black background.

The Sega Saturn was on view, as Sega previewed some of the software, most notably the home version of **Virtual Fighters**, which is very close to arcade quality. They also are looking toward late-year delivery, but the price is vague: somewhere between \$300-500.

For computerists, the name of the game is CD-ROM. Few companies are now developing for disk, although many will bring out disk versions of games done first for CD. Hybrids, with both Windows and Macintosh programs on one disk, are popular, especially in edutainment and kideo games, but less practical for large programs.

There's a continuing flood of multimedia edutainment, fueled



by educational companies seeking the home market, and game companies trying to cash in on the educational boom.

Production values are high, but the content varies from curriculum based to completely banal. More savvy companies are lacing their educational products heavily with entertainment.

Rumors and More Rumors

Most industry watchers agreed that this was not a great product show. Sure, there were good programs on view, but the focus of the show was more on deal-making and speculation about the future.

Rumors ran rampant through the halls. The most dramatic were reports that Apple would be taken over by Oracle Corp., Philips and Matsushita Electric Industrial. It didn't seem too unreasonable in view of discussions last spring between Oracle's principal officer, Lawrence Ellison, and financier Michael Milken on how to acquire Apple. Despite denials from company officials, journalists joked about a Mac with slots for 3DO and CD-i disks.

Looking Toward E3

There was a strong attitude of dissatisfaction about the convention among its attendees. More than ever before, the gaming industry resented the tents. The soaking rains, certainly not the fault of the hosting committee, created an atmosphere of discomfort. And although sales reports from 1994 were good and companies were committed to a year of new developments, the dismal atmosphere lessened the fun of the occasion.

Perhaps that is why the most widely discussed subject at the exhibition was not the Winter Consumer Electronics Show, but the next convention. Most companies said that they were looking toward E-3, scheduled for mid-May in Los Angeles, to make their biggest product announcements of the year.

(Joyce Worley)

Accusations & Denial

When businesses fail, there is often a great deal of confusion surrounding the final events. Such is the case with Three-Sixty Software, which went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year and subsequently disposed of all assets. Many cross-licensing deals affected different products. This one concerns *V for Victory*, designed by Atomic Games.

Three-Sixty owed Atomic a sizable sum for back royalties, and an out-of-court settlement halted Three-Sixty from further licensing of *V for Victory*. Later, Mainstream America contacted Three-Sixty, to buy a license to do a CD-ROM compilation of the *V for Victory* series. Tom Frisina had the company VP contact Atomic, but Atomic refused the deal, and this was contrabanded to Mainstream. Mainstream contacted Frisina again in May, but once again Atomic refused to approve the deal.

"This was the last time the subject of *V for Victory* was ever discussed with me until Nov. 15, 1994, two months after the sale to Intracorp through Chapter 11," said Tom Frisina. "Our Creditor Committee Counsel received a phone call from Atomic with allegations that Three-Sixty forged Atomic's signature in an agreement...allowing Mainstream the CD-ROM *V for Victory* rights."

It seems a contract did show up, with an agreement signed by the principals of Mainstream, Three-Sixty and Atomic, that Mainstream would be allowed to do a compilation of Atomic's series.

After looking at the contract, Frisina stated: "My signature was a forgery. The date of signature, Sept. 20, 1994, four days before the sale of Three-Sixty to Intracorp in the Court, was reflective of how preposterous the allegation of my forging a signature actually was. A forgery as flagrant as that surely would not go unnoticed."

"The construction of the paragraph dealing with payments to licensee stated that all advances and future royalties were paid directly to the agent. If there had been any moneys paid under those circumstances, none of it would have gone to Three-Sixty or Intracorp or Atomic Games."

Accusations of wrong doing surrounded the event. Keith Zahalaoui of Atomic contacted Mainstream after a friend saw the compilation at a tradeshow. Mainstream said, "But we have a contract," and they sent it to him. Keith says, "Someone signed my name, it doesn't even look close to my signature. Actually, it looks like a female's signature."

Handwriting experts have been hired, and all concerned parties are seeking legal retribution. Lawrence Norman, Frisina's agent, worked on the bargain distribution deals for Three-Sixty, and that's where the paper trail ends. But Norman says the contract was signed when he received it.

"I did not nor would I ever forge anyone's signature to any document," insists Tom Frisina. "Three-Sixty accomplished a lot during its seven years, and I hope its legacy will be that of a company with ambitious expectations, striving to push the product envelope, but in the end not financed well enough to overcome some bumps in the road."

SONY SNEAK-PEEK PLAYSTATION

"There were 300,000 units sold in Japan in one month," said Steve Race, the proud president of Sony Computer Entertainment at the sneak-peek of the PlayStation.

On the spot Sony execs spoke of Sony's financial worth, and gave a solemn prediction: "Sony will not let this fail." They promised strong advertising support on TV and in print to guarantee the product's successful launch.

Although the Sony exec wouldn't give a definite date for the U.S. launch, it's scheduled for the fourth quarter. The retail price isn't set, but it was \$400 in Japan and will probably be less here.

CDs, now priced at \$55-60 in Japan, will cost about the same as cartridges. Sony spokesmen explained why CDs, which cost a dollar or less, should sell for as much as carts that cost up to \$20 to manufacture:

"Because of increased production costs, software costs run \$3-4 million for R&D. The risk is shifting from inventory to product development." He pointed to audio as an example. "Even though the CD medium is cheaper, prices for audio CDs did not come down."

PlayStation Facts:

It features a double speed drive. The operating system is in "kernels," so Sony can make substantial changes to future hardware without losing compatibility. It does a half billion calculations per second, with unlimited sprites and has 3-D capability.

The demos of Namco's **Ridge Racer** and Takara's fighting

game showed highlighting, scaling, rotation, multiple perspectives and varied special effects including 3-D.

Game Makers Jump To Sony PlayStation

Sony signed licensing agreements with almost 100 U.S. publishers and developers, to produce software for the PlayStation. This is in addition to the 290 licensees in Japan.

Game makers will pay a \$7 royalty per game, and use a development system that takes advantage of Macintosh development tools, with converters, and a new bus-based sound card. Games are on black 616 megabyte CDs, and all product

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT		News and Information
Playstation Specifications		
Main CPU Instruction Cache Data Cache	32-bit RISC (R3000A) 4KB 1KB	
CPU clock frequency	33MHz	
RAM	1M Main, 256K 8 Main (VRAM) 4 Main (Cache)	
Graphics Processor (GPU) Pixels rendering performance	Max. 4000 per 1/60 second Reticles/vertices	
Full color display Resolution	Coloration possible with sprites displayed Maximum 16,770,000 colors 256 x 224 up to 640 x 480 dots	
Geometry Engine (GTU) Vertex processing speed	4,000,000 per second (1,500,000 polygons per second in the case of the shading) Texture mapping, Coarse shading, Fog depth coding	
Sound Processor (SPU) Simultaneous sound channels Sample rate Playback quantization	Max. 24 channels Max. 44.1 kHz 16-bit digital effect capability	
Data decompression engine (MDEC) Directly connected to CPU bus Supporting format Video playback function Playback time	JPEG Full screen, full color 35 minutes from one CD-ROM etc.	
Data saving method	Memory card	
Video, audio output	Composite video, S-Video, RGB output stereo audio, RF power output	

will be made in Sony's factories in Terre Haute, IN or Springfield, OR. However, Sony promises a quick manufacturing turnaround, so companies will not have to place huge orders, but can instead reorder when supplies run low.

The U.S. list of developers includes industry leaders such as Acclaim, Activision, American Laser, Boss, Core Design, Crystal Dynamics, Data East, EA, GameTek, LucasArts, Novotrade, p.f. Magic, Psygnosis, Sierra, Mindscape, Spectrum Holobyte, SSI, Viacom, Virgin and many

others. In Japan, where more than 200 titles are in development, with 19 titles already available. Bandai, Capcom and Konami lead the list.

Acclaim Announces Titles For PlayStation

"Sony has created a powerful hardware system and Acclaim

plans to support it with compelling, high-profile titles," said an enthusiastic Rob Holmes, Acclaim's president.

Acclaim announced three titles for the PlayStation, including **Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball**, **Alien Trilogy** and **Batman Forever**. All three will utilize Acclaim's motion-capture technology.

VIRTUAL BOY TAKES VIRTUAL BOW

Nintendo's Virtual Boy made its American debut and praise from previous skeptics. The 32-bit game system produces 3-D graphics by using red LEDs (light-emitting diodes) against a black background.

The goggles stand on a tripod (about the height of a coffee table leg) and produce stereo images through a pair of speakers and Bark the eye pieces. Attached to the tripod are two joysticks.

The unit will retail for about \$200, and games should cost about \$30. It comes with one game pack, and Nintendo promises a library of products from their own designers as well as from third-party manufacturers.

Virtual Boy should be virtually ready by the summer of '95.



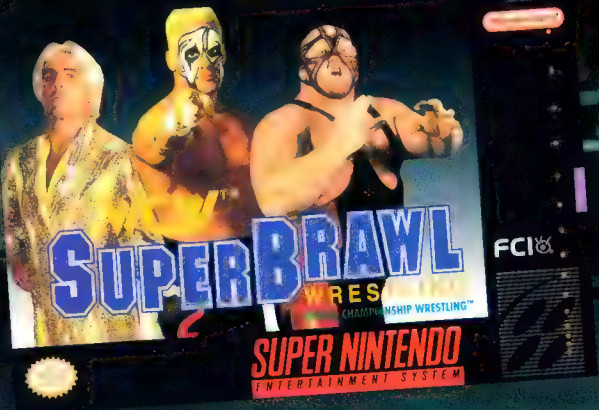
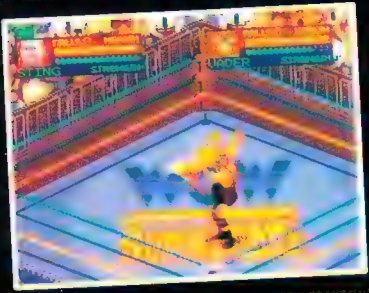
VIRTUAL BOY
To debut summer '95

MICROSOFT DOES 3-D FOR SATURN

Microsoft's SoftImage 3-D will be the official 3-D development tool for Sega's Saturn game platform, per a letter of agreement between the two companies. Microsoft will provide a customized SoftImage toolkit and animation software for Saturn development.

SoftImage 3-D contains software tools for creating, animating and rendering 3-D imagery and lets animators reproduce motions of people and live-action models.

SLAMMERS



Step into the ring with the WCW's best! Dozens of classic moves plus signature moves make this the most realistic action you'll find outside the square circle.

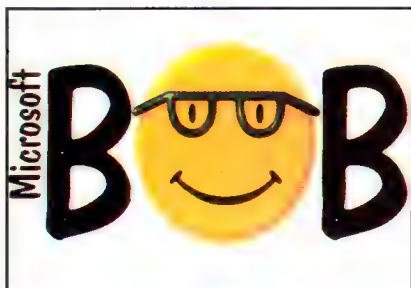


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WHO IS BOB?

Microsoft introduced an integrated program designed to help the new home computerist, with eight programs (letter writer, calendar, checkbook, household manager, address book, e-mail, financial guide, and the game **GeoSafari**.) Then they yielded to whimsy and named it **Bob**, to make it seem friendly to users.

Bob is not a character in the product, although it's symbolized by a spectacled smile face in various places. However,



users can choose from a cast of characters, "Friends of Bob," to be on-screen companions and helpers. These animations have



individual personalities and conversational styles.

The interface is seen as a home, designed from more than 40 combinations of rooms and styles and can be customized with new decor and varied scenery outside the windows. It sells for about \$99 and runs with Windows 3.1, on a 486 computer with



8 MB of memory. An add-on, **Microsoft Great Greetings**, will cost about \$20.

32X GETS QUICK FIX

Sega experienced higher than normal returns (about 10 percent) on the 32X. Sega research found that this resulted from some people being unable to hook up the machine.

It seems that hookup with older Genesis players or older TV sets is ticklish, so Sega came up with a simplified instruction sheet, now available at retailers.

Sega believes this will solve most problems.

If buyers are still frustrated after using the instruction sheet, counselors at Sega's consumer help line will provide a walk-through.

Some older television sets may need a 1632 R.F. adaptor. If gamers still can't connect the 32X after the walk-through, they can obtain the needed adaptor through a retailer or direct from Sega.

Sega is currently evaluating the need to pack the 1632 adaptor with future equipment.

THE SPIRIT CD

Byron Preiss Multimedia will produce **The Spirit** for CD-ROM, with a year's worth of strips, a screen saver, print shop and interviews with its maker, Will Eisner.

ATARI NEWS

Jaguar Gets CD

Atari introduced a Jaguar CD peripheral, designed to sell for \$149.99. The CD player plugs into the top of the Jaguar, then plays CD Jaguar games and regular audio CDs.

The double-speed drive has 790 megabytes of data storage and comes with one game. The first CD titles are *Battlemorph*, *Blue Lightning*, *Highlander*, *Demolition Man* and *Creatory Shock*. There should be 15 titles released during the first half of this year, with more to follow.

The CD player also comes with the Virtual Light Machine, which provides a light show, with 81 pattern settings, to go with music played through the system.

The Jaguar is now available through 2,000 retail outlets in the U.K., Europe, Japan, Canada and the USA, including *Electronics Boutique*, *Babbage's*, *Toys 'R' Us* and *Target*.

Jaguar Gains Spots

Atari plans a group of peripherals for the Jaguar. Sam Tramiel, CEO of Atari Corp., said, "By the end of the year, players will link multiple systems, play each other over the phone and venture into new virtual-reality environments with their Jaguar systems."

The Jag Link cable, to network machines up to 100 feet



apart, will sell for under \$30 and should be available during the second quarter.

The Jag Voice/Data Communicator lets players connect over the phone. It comes with a headset, call-waiting game pause and should cost under \$150, in the third quarter.

A virtual-reality headset is now under development, and should be available before Christmas for under \$200.

Atari Offers Game Giveaway

Atari has a special incentive promotion in effect. Purchasers get the Jaguar base unit, one controller and one game (*Cybermorph*) for \$250, with an in-pack offer for a free game and an additional controller.

Until the end of April, proof of purchase plus receipt gets the controller and either *Tempest 2000* or *Wolfenstein 3D*.



Atari Releases Sales Data

According to the Atari Corp., there are between 150,000 and 200,000 Jaguar owners (as of the end of 1994).

There are currently about 20 Jaguar games, and the company expects to have 50 to 60 by mid-1995, and from 80 to 100 by the end of the year. Of this number, about 60-65% are by Atari, and 30-35% are by third-party game makers.

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SMOKE & MIRRORS BY PENN & TELLER

Penn & Teller, unique performers/magicians/illusionists/con artists, performed a special trick before a press conference during the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Penn & Teller and Absolute Entertainment's Garry Kitchin (president) and Barry Marx (game designer) announced the release of Penn & Teller's *Snake and Mirrors* (referred to as "P & T's S & M" by Penn Jillette), a combination of magic tricks, gags and video games for Sega CD and PC CD-ROM formats.

Then Penn introduced the duo's next project: a virtual partner. Then real partner Teller was wheeled out on a table with a Sega game pad connected to his head. Marx "controlled" Teller's movements as Penn demonstrated how much abuse a virtual partner could take, eventually cutting him in half with an electric saw.



NEON DEION PLAYS BALL WITH SEGA

"Neon" Deion Sanders of the San Francisco 49ers announced his agreement with Sega to help produce football games for the Sega game machines in 1995. The announcement came on the eve of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas at a Sega press conference.

Sanders' surprise entrance was preceded by Sega cheerleaders whooping and swinging special Sega doo-rags given to all audience members. Later in the press conference, Sega president Tom Kalinske showed his enthusiasm by joining the great football star in donning a doo-rag and formally ushering in a new era and attitude for Sega sports titles.



BARGAINING BLOCK

Bullfrog hopped over to Electronic Arts. The English game developers (**Populous, Powermonger, Syndicate, Theme Park, Magic Carpet**, et al) will be a wholly owned subsidiary... Warner Music purchased a 35% interest in Accolade, and will take over worldwide distribution rights to all Accolade products. Accolade is using the influx of capital (about \$10 Million) to finance development of games for PC CD and next generation platforms... Packard Bell and Microsoft shook hands; all Packard Bell systems will be developed using Microsoft's Hardware Design Guide to maximize them for Windows 95... Iguana Entertainment (**NBA JAM, NFL Quarterback Club**, et al) is being acquired by Acclaim...

The Allen Group bought 40% of FOREM, one of the leading suppliers of wireless telecommunication products in Europe... Composer Tommy Tallarico (best known for the music in Virgin's **Cool Spot** and **Aladdin** Genesis games) will create soundtracks for some of Playmates' future products... Nintendo and GTE agreed to explore network gaming, and develop video game products. The first joint effort is **FX Fighter** for SNES. Sony established Sony Computer Entertainment (Europe) to introduce the PlayStation over there. The new company will be located in London.. Acclaim Comics, under the Armada imprint, will publish two monthly series based on *Magic: The Gathering*...

DISTRI-DEALS

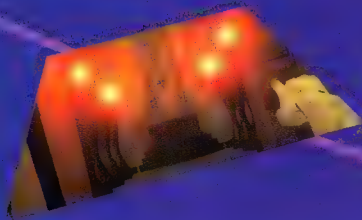
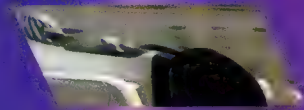
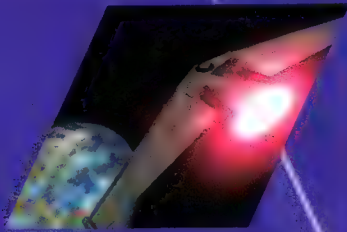
Matsushita agreed to purchase Crystal Dynamics 3DO products, and then sell them in more than 10,000 stores in Japan... Williams Electronics Games expanded its distributor team with the addition of Betson

Pacific and James Industries South Puerto Rico... Random House invested in Humongous Entertainment, and will also distribute the Humongous titles to bookstores... Intracorp signed a distribution deal with U.S. Gold, who'll distribute all 1995 Capstone, Next Move Series and Three-Sixty software in Europe... U.S. Gold, through their new PC division Front Street Publishing, also made a deal with Gremlin Interactive, for distribution of Gremlin's product in North America... NEC will distribute Future Vision's CD ROMs (including the hit **Leonardo The Inventor**) to Japan... Acclaim Distribution made a deal with VIDCO International, adding over 50,000 worldwide outlets to Acclaim's markets...

EDU-DEALS

Harcourt Brace is working with Edmark to develop multimedia educational products. They will concentrate on the kindergarten through eighth grade school market as their prime audience... Franklin premiered *Bookman*, hand-held electronic books with a cartridge slot and keyboard. A built in database has dictionaries, Bibles, encyclopedias, and a cookbook. Additional references and entertainment titles range from \$10-\$90... EduSoft gave Bertelsmann the marketing rights for the German language versions of their English Discoveries learning software, for three years in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein. English Discoveries will be distributed by Dida-El in Italy... Simon & Schuster plans to evaluate and test market cable television delivery of multimedia educational software... Peterson's Guides is planing an Internet area for college applications and other information...

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THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

The Floating Decimal Error Puts Intel On The Spot

The computer world rocked when Intel revealed that the Pentium chip contained a flaw. It was discovered by a mathematician who found a floating decimal point that could cause errors in some complex equations.

Intel research first indicated that the error was extremely rare, occurring "only once in 27,000 years." However, IBM did further tests and discovered that it was less rare than originally thought and could show up on spreadsheets every few weeks. Some companies found the error even more frequently.

IBM halted shipment on their top computers, the Pentium line, until the flawed chip could be replaced.

The chain of events started repercussions felt around the computing world. Some companies immediately began work on software "patches" to correct the flaw. Intel itself promised replacement chips "for those who do heavy calculations with their computers."

The Wall Street trading firm Smith Barney demanded replacement of chips in their 600 Pentiums. A public outcry grew on-line that reproached Intel for its cavalier attitude and demanded they stand behind the product.

Virtually all other companies with computers that use the chip were quick to ensure the public of their own efforts. AST continued to ship computers with the chip, but established a special 800 phone line to expedite complaints. Hewlett-Packard also continued to ship computers with the chip, but announced it would ensure satisfaction to its customers. IBM guaranteed replacement of the flawed chip at no cost to the owners. Sequent Computer Systems stopped shipment briefly, then provided customers a software detection and correction disk.

Within days, Intel adopted a no-questions-asked replacement policy for all customers who request it, rather than just those who proved they needed it. "To some people this policy [of replacement only when users proved need] seemed arrogant and uncaring, and we apologize for that," said Andrew Grove, Intel's chairman, when he announced the replacement effort, estimated to cost the company about \$100 million. Owners can call 800-628-8686 to make arrangements for the swap.

The Outrage On-Line

Much of the argument and debate over the flaw over the Intel Inside occurred on-line, where technicians and computer hobbyists hashed over the problem and demanded solutions. Intel's decision to offer replacements to everyone was largely due to this vocal group of technically savvy folk.

Mixed in with the serious discussions there were lots of wisecracks, jokes at Intel's expense and plenty of Pentium puns. Here's a sample of some of the best jokes on Internet:

Why didn't Intel call the Pentium the 586? Because they added 486 and 100 and got 585.999983605.

How many Pentium designers does it take to screw in a light bulb? 1.99904274017. That's close enough for non-technical people.

What do you get when you cross a Pentium computer with a research grant? A mad scientist.

What is the successor to the RU-486 birth control drug? The RU-Pentium. It prevents cells from dividing properly.

What's another name for the Intel Inside sticker they put on Pentiums? Warning Label.

Here are Intel's Top 10 new slogans for the Pentium:

9.99973351—It's a flaw, dammit, not a bug!

8.99916262—It's close enough. We say so.

7.99941461—Nearly 300 correct opcodes.

6.99983157—You don't need to know what's inside.

5.99983157—Redefining the PC, and mathematics as well.

4.99999021—We fixed it. Really.

3.99982459—Division considered harmful.

2.99915236—Why do you think they call it a floating point?

1.99910357—We're looking for a few good flaws.

0.99999998—The errata inside.

SALES STATS

As the new year began, companies started bean counting to come up with the results for 1994. Here are some preliminary figures:

Donkey Kong Country was the most successful video game in history. According to Nintendo, it sold more than 6 million cartridges in six weeks, and sales continue to be strong.

Sega says the demand for the 32X unit exceeded their supply. More than 300,000 units were sold during the first two weeks of December, and the company had to go on around-the-clock work schedules to ship more units to retailers before Christmas. By the end of the calendar year, sales reached 600,000.

3DO passed the half-million mark in installed units and have a software-to-hardware ration that ranges from 6-to-1 to 9-to-1, depending on the country. There are already 140 3DO games in distribution, with another 150 in the queue for this year.

Nintendo had a 30 percent sales growth in Latin America, where they sold more than a million hardware units in 1994. Nintendo traditionally does not release total worldwide sales numbers.

Sega claims a 55 percent share of the 16-Bit market at the end of November and expected its lead to increase over Christmas. Although the company announced no totals, Sega's President Tom Kalinske said in a separate announcement that the industry sold nearly 8 million 16-Bit systems in 1994.

Sales of PC CD ROM systems were estimated at about 4 million units.

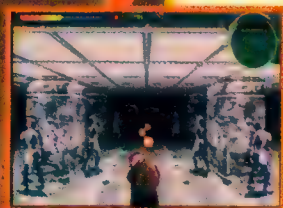
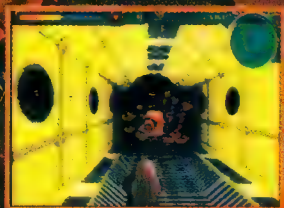
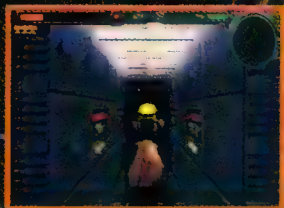
Philips announced that sales of the CD-i doubled in 1994, and claims that between 800,000 and 900,000 units are installed worldwide.

Leonardo The Inventor, a CD-ROM from Future Vision, has sold more than 100,000 copies and continues to sell about 5,000 per month.

VIRTUOSO™

Life Sucks. Rock And Roll Is Dead.
So Blast A Few Heads.

In the year 2056, life is just another word for chaos. Sure, your music has given you some moments of escape, but your rock superstar status has also given you too many nights locked away in hotel rooms, away from the din of crazed fans. Virtuoso is the only reality that means anything anymore. In the world of Virtuoso you'll blast cyborgs in cavernous, sub-Martian passages, encounter the living dead in a Haunted House and submerge yourself with strange life forms in an Underwater Biosphere. Now, isn't that just what you needed?



VIC TOKAI INC. 22904 Lockness Ave. Torrance, CA 90501

PC CD-ROM

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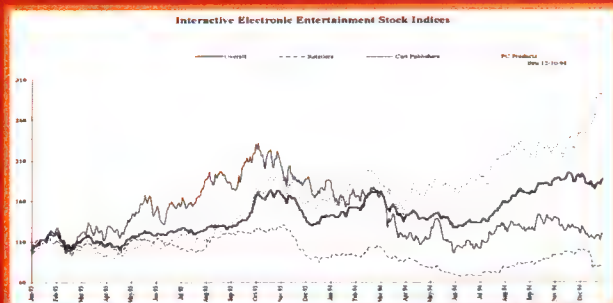
CYBERSTOCKS: Dec. 1994

The year 1994 ended on a depressing note as the Electronic Games Interactive Electronics Index dipped 2.5 percent from November. Performance by sector varied significantly. Stronger-than-expected sales of PCs prompted investors to bid up prices of the PC sector companies by more than 20 percent. A weak overall retail environment, coupled with Funco's earnings shortfall, took a 17 percent toll on the retail sector. (Beginning in December, we broadened the retail subindex to include Comp USA and Egghead, to offset the merger of Babbages and Software Etc. into NeoStar.) The share prices of cartridge publishers declined more than 5 percent during the month.

There were several standout performers, both strong and weak. Broderbund jumped 30 percent on far-better-than-expected November quarter sales and earnings (from *PrintShop* and *Myst*). America Online took top honors during December, up 34 percent on rapidly growing subscriber rolls and strong PC sales. Sierra On-Line posted a 20 percent increase on product releases including *KQ7*. Losers were Funco, which dropped almost 60 percent due to weak video game cartridge results, 3DO down 24.5 percent on news of strong Japanese customer response to the Sega Saturn and Sony PS/X and Alias Research down 23 percent. ERTS and AKLM were down 3 percent and 8 percent respectively, as investors began to cut back positions after the holidays.

The 1994 roundup gives top awards to Broderbund, up 171 percent from 1993's closing price, Sierra On-Line registered an 86 percent gain, while Spectrum HoloByte rose 46 percent. Virtually all PC publishers were strong. Big losers were Funco, down 60 percent, 3DO off 54 percent on slower than expected growth and Electronic Arts, Acclaim and WMS, all 30-35 percent lower on slowing cartridge and arcade sales.

So what are the key questions of early 1995? First, how clean was sell-through of cartridges, and what commitment will retailers continue to make to the 16-Bit segment? Second, will consumer demand for PC titles jump the holiday lump and be strong into spring, or will all those bundled titles stifle demand for a while? Finally, can the publishers get the new products done on time (*Phantasmagoria*, *ST: TNG*, *11th Hour*, etc.)? It's also time to start thinking about themes for the year, including the introduction of Windows '95 (96?), an attendant upgrade cycle and new game platform introductions in August/September.



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

ALG GETS QQP

American Laser Games has signed an agreement to acquire Quantum Quality Productions. QQP will become a wholly owned subsidiary of ALG but will continue to operate independent offices in Flemington, NJ.

ALG President Robert Grebe was enthusiastic about the acquisition. "Bruce Williams Zaccagnino [the founder of QQP] ranks right up there with Will Wright, Gary Grigsby and Sid Meier. We are delighted to have established this working relationship with him."

ALG will take over the distribution and marketing of QQP titles and will probably release some of their hits to other platforms. In return, QQP will contribute expertise to the strategy content in ALG's future live-action titles.

QQP attracted critical acclaim with *The Perfect General*, *The Lost Admiral* and *The Grandest Fleet*.

UNISYS CLAIMS RIGHTS UNDER GIF PATENT

Unisys Corp. shocked the computer industry by announcing it would enforce its rights to GIF, a widely used graphics technology. Then after outcry on-line, the company announced it would seek fees only on new products that use its LZW technology.

Unisys said it will negotiate with the developers of "commercial, for-profit software, hardware and services," to make licenses available on "reasonable and non-discriminatory terms." The company said it does not want to discourage end users from using GIF. "Our only intended action in this area is negotiating with software developers. Unisys will not take action directly against any individual user."

STAR POWER

Nintendo bought the license to *Goldeneye*, the new James Bond movie starring Pierce Brosnan. The SNES game and film are both scheduled for holiday gaming during the fourth quarter of this year. Rare Ltd., the creator of *Donkey Kong Country*, will use Silicon Graphics workstations to send the super spy to New Russia.



Comic book creator Todd McFarlane will work with Sony Imagesoft to create games based on *Spawn*. Titles for SNES, Genesis, MPC and Macintosh CD, PlayStation and other systems will ship this fall.

William Shatner beamed into cyberspace to chat up his new show *TekWar: The Series*, on the Prodigy network. Prodigy has been featuring a series of big names from music, movies, TV and sports. Shatner used the high-tech net to promote his film.



Dean Cain and Justin Whalin (*Superman* and *Jimmy Olson* from *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*) met their matches when they gamed with top gridiron men, NY Jets Marcus Turner and his teammate Bobby Houston in cross-country bouts of *Madden NFL '95*, via XBAND Video Game Modem and Network. (The Jets won two out of three, with scores of 41-12, and 44-18.)

BLOWN AWAY

Twisted Villain. Twisted Logic. Twisted Games.

"IT BLEW ME AWAY!" -Electronic Games

"Blown Away uniquely blends multiple genres for a true interactive experience." -Computer Player



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Whispers from Cyberspace

JJ Barrel—he's everywhere! He desktops by night and writes the secret truths that others dare not reveal. JJ puts his private eyes and journalistic spies into every corner of the interactive entertainment world. JJ Barrel prints tomorrow's headlines today, and he takes no prisoners! Now, still drying off from his week at the Consumer Electronics Show—JJ Barrel!

As the Winter CES headed down that same lonesome road as the now-defunct Summer CES? The mood was ugly in the wretched tents in which the show again exiled the gaming exhibitors. The sponsors reportedly have a deal with the Sands for its million-square-foot convention center for 1996, but a disgruntled industry may consider this too little, too late...

The hottest CES rumor: Oracle, Matsushita and Philips have tendered a take-over bid for Apple. Pavilion F (the multimedia exhibit) buzzed and Apple stock went crazy, but at presstime there is still no confirmation of this landmark deal...

The funniest CES rumor: China will buy up the world's supply of Amiga computers. These cast-off machines will weld the country into one huge network. According to this story, the incompatibility with Internet will enforce Chinese isolation in the Age of the Information Superhighway...

Can Sega take it as well as dish it out? Its in-your-face style gave Nintendo some bad moments, but karma hit this time. Sony moved into Sega's traditional HQ, the Alexis Park. High-spirited PSXers put up balloons with anti-Sega taunts and a big sign that read, "Hey Sega, didn't this used to be your hotel?" The night of Sega's party, Sony took down the original balloons and put up ones with sayings like "Sony Loves Sega" and "PSX Loves Saturn." The peace offering apparently came too late. The next morning, Sony found the balloons slashed and the signs ripped off the walls. Scrawled on the back of one sign was: "Don't F— with Sega!"

Look out for Gold Star! This marketing tiger is making all the right moves for 3DO. It has a \$399 bundle with FIFA Soccer and Shockwave, a low-cost 3DO card for multimedia computers, and a hot new software line...

Whoops, there it is! Nintendo's Killer Instinct arcade hit runs off a hard drive. Despite the company's Ultra 64 spiel, it looks like silicon isn't always better than mylar...

Don't believe those bogus early reports on Virtual Boy. The red-on-black 3-D graphics aren't exactly SVGA, but it's a lot of fun. Maybe it's the Vectrex of the '90s...

NET NEWS

The **Doom II** Nationwide Tournament runs through April 1 on the Cyber-Net BBS (Data). Call 516-536-1788 to register, then compete on Level 7 ... Atlas Software has an America Online area for info, articles and

tips. Access it with Keyword: Atlas ... United Pictures ran a preview of *Street Fighter* (the movie) on Internet in December, then followed it with *Tales From The Crypt: Demon Knight* in January. UP plans net debuts of top movies on a regular basis ... Sports fans had a two-hour chat

with Fiesta Bowl coaches and players via CompuServe, and Vice President Gore used Internet to wish them well ... Expect to see shareware versions of more products on-line. The first episode of GT Interactive's **Heretic** and Interplay's **Descent** premiered there, and several other manufacturers have similar plans ... Motorola's Wireless Sports Channel went on-line with the Contender sports info service for pagers, portable PC and palmtop computers ... Prodigy introduced a Windows-based interface, access to the Internet, and a World Wide Web browser. The company also added a Black Experience Bulletin Board as part of their Cultures Home Page ... INPUT predicts 200 million people will be connected to Internet by the year 2000. There are about 25 million netters now ... The Dept. of Defense is funding the Southwest Border States Anti-Drug Information System so law enforcement officers can exchange info on-line, to curtail drug trafficking ... Fujitsu, Hewlett Packard Singapore Philips Singapore, and Mitsui are working with Singapore Telecom on a Video On Demand trial ... Harper-Collins put 'more than 10,000 books and software titles on sale on Delphi's On-line Bookstore ... Wells Fargo and CyberCash are launching a payment system for Internet users this year, and should have an electronic cash system by next year.

TOP VIDEO GAMES December 1994

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

Top SNES Carts

1. *Donkey Kong Country*, Nintendo
2. *Madden NFL '95*, EA Sports
3. *Mortal Kombat II*, Acclaim

Kong stays king of the hill as **Mortal Kombat II** resurfaces in the lineup.

Top Genesis Carts

1. *Madden '95*, EA Sports
 2. *NBA Live '95*, EA Sports
 3. *Mortal Kombat II*, Acclaim
- Madden '95** holds, **NBA Live '95** lives and **MKII** fights back.

Top Sega CD

1. *Power Rangers*, Sega
2. *Star Wars 3-D: Rebel Assault*, JVC
3. *Pitfall Harry: The Mayan Adventure*, Activision

The **Power Rangers** morph into the top spot as **Star Wars** gains a notch and **Pitfall Harry** appears on the horizon.

TOP COMPUTER GAMES December 1994

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

Top PC Disks

1. *Master of Magic*, MicroProse
 2. *Colonization*, Spectrum HoloByte
 3. *Microsoft Space Simulator*, Microsoft
- An all-new lineup for this month.

Top Macintosh Disks

1. *SimCity 2000*, Maxis
 2. *Links Pro*, Access
 3. *Star Trek Training Tech Manual*, Simon & Schuster
- Star Trek** takes over the third spot as the **Chessmaster** drops out of the top three.

Top CD-ROMs

1. *Doom II* (MPC), GT Interactive
 2. *Myst* (MPC/Mac), Broderbund
 3. *5 Ft 10 Pack Vol. 2* (MPC), Sirius
- Doom II** easily displaces former #1 **Myst** in its first appearance on the charts.

NOTHING, NOTHING CAN PREPARE YOUR 32X.



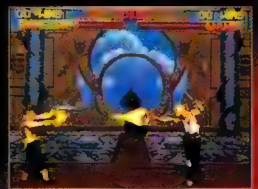
UNLEASH JOHNNY CAGE'S
SHADOW KICK!



ALL THE ACTION OF THE
ARCADE SMASH!



FRIENDSHIP?



FLAMING SKULLS SCREAM
PAST YOU IN STEREO!

MORTAL KOMBAT II

Rip into the *real* arcade action that 32 megs of high-speed, 32 bit processing can deliver! Trade-up to faster game play, realistic character animation, state-of-the-art graphics and the bone-crunching music and sound f/x of the arcade smash—from "Finish Him" to "Flawless Victory." You might have played it before but... Nothing, NOTHING can prepare you for MKII on 32X!



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GENESIS
32X



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GAME DOCTOR

Video Game MIAs

Ah, you're back!

It's always so nice to see a full office, especially after the holidays. All that new hardware and software—they always seem to give rise to a lot of questions. To that end, we're going to try to answer as many Qs as possible, starting with this issue's Game Doctor Prize Packet winner.

Oh and before we start, remember that the Doc is now on-line. Send all those queries, comments, and corrections to: Game Nurse@aol.com and your questions will reach our office instantaneously!

Finally, I'm waiting on a call at this very moment that may or may not clear up the Great 2600 Mystery. With any luck, we'll be able to tell James Catalano of Chicago, IL, exactly how the old Atari VCS got that name, while also doing my best to respond to the following...

Q: Do you know what ever happened to a Genesis RPG called **Star Odyssey** that was supposed to come out in '92? There were actually ads for it [in magazines] and [another magazine] actually reviewed it! Another game that was advertised for a while was **Hellraiser**. It was supposed to be for the NES, and I recall the ads claiming the game had "over 1 million" worlds or levels!

What gives with these non-releases? Why would a company go through all the time and expense to develop a game, and even advertise it, and then just can it? Is there some weird strategy involved here that we consumers just can't see?

Also, I wonder if you can tell me which of Sega's Sonic games were developed in the U.S., and which were made in Japan? I think I read somewhere that the original **Sonic** and **Sonic CD** were Japanese-programmed, while **Sonic 2** was U.S.-

made. And who did **Sonic Spinball** (Genesis version)?

R. I. Parker
Greensboro, NC

A: Looks like you've copped another Prize Packet, RIP. I won't go into the specific sad stories regarding the MIA games you mentioned and will, instead, discuss why games that you've seen mentioned, pictured and even reviewed sometimes never actually show up on retail shelves.

First, timing has a lot to do with it. In 1984, when the video game market was collapsing (much as the 16-Bit cartridge market is currently going el-foldo), scores of announced, finished products were dumped. The reason? The market was disappearing, stores were canceling orders and there would have



ACCESS Brings You a Virtual World Interactive Movie!

What Reviewers Are Saying:

"Lots of games push the envelope—Under a Killing Moon blows it to smithereens!"

—William Trotter, *PC Entertainment*

"A ground breaking CD adventure!"

—Joyce Worley, *Electronic Games*

"Under a Killing Moon combines the best elements of movies and computer games... It literally pulls you into the screen."

—Denny Atkin, *Entertainment Editor, Compute Magazine*

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

been no way to sell them.

Even in less distressing times, however, games still get canceled before release, much as movies sometimes do, for similar reasons. Once a film or game is "in the can" it's true that a good deal of money has been spent.

But then consider the cost of having those games turned into expensive ROM carts (or that film master duplicated), then the

money that would have to be shelled out on packaging, marketing and advertising. You've heard the expression, "Why throw good money after bad?" Well, so have game publishers.

Or let's say you've developed a mediocre basketball game and you go to CES and discover that a dozen other publishers also have basketball games, and all of them are better than yours. What do you do? If you're smart, you bury your b-ball program.

Other times, the programmers leave. I recall a superb game Virgin was working on about eight years ago called *N.Y. Warriors*, a very good vertically scrolling arcade shooter with great, digitized sound. The product was about 80-90% done when the programmers bolted and the game was too buggy and the code too impenetrable for anyone else to complete.

There are also instances when retailers make the decision for the publisher. If, say, Toys 'R' Us and Babbages look at a video game and decide not to order, that game is really between a rock and a hard place.

Finally, just because you see a screen shot, that is not necessarily an indication that it was taken from a completed game. Often, screenshots are produced as DPaint files before the game is actually developed.

And that's the story of how even completed games disappear into the Twilight Zone. As for the Sonic games, it is my understanding

that *Sonic 3*, *Sonic Spinball*, and *Sonic & Knuckles* were all developed in the States. That can be confusing, however, since I believe Sega now has a Japanese development group working at nearby SoA HQ.

Q&A Quickies: Reader Ken Kupelian was nice enough to send along the names of several stores that sell older video game hardware and/or software, including Telegames USA (214-227-7694) which specializes in Atari, Intellivision and ColecoVision; and R&R Software (617-878-4365), and Adam's House (Rte. 2, Box 2756; 1829-1 County Road 130; Pearland, TX 77581-9503), which deal mostly with ColecoVision product ... Jack Spenser of Roxbury, NY, wonders what "MPEG" stands for; it's "Moving Pictures Experts Group" ... Omar "Ken" T. from Pakistan says he's seen references to scrolling being "NA" on the Genesis. He wants to know if this is true and, by the way, what the heck does "NA" mean, since he sees it in charts constantly. First off, the term "NA" or "N/A" means either "not available" or "not applicable." For example, in EG's video game reviews, there's a category that lists the number of levels a game has, but some games (such as sports sims) don't have levels, so "N/A" is listed. Other times, the information is not available—Acclaim, for example, has a policy of never revealing the amount of memory (i.e., "Megs") its games contain.

Finally, I don't know where you read that the Genesis doesn't have scrolling, but that's obviously wrong. The system even performs "parallax scrolling" in which several layers of background objects scroll at different speeds (the near backgrounds move quickly while the rear backdrops move progressively slower) to enhance the illusion of depth ... Nicholas Lipari from Grant, AL, wants to know if he can play his DOS games on Windows. Sorry, Nicholas.

And that about finishes up our space for this issue's Game Doctor session, which means we'll have to tell you the story of how the 2600 got its name (number?) next issue. (What a tease!).

Remember to send those questions, comments and corrections to:

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

**Format:
2 CD's for
MS-DOS**

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

A: They all star in ACCESS Software's new CD thriller *Under a Killing Moon!*

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And don't forget, as CEO you're still responsible for things like plane maintenance, advertising and handling those periodic emergencies such as a plane crash or employee strike. Get ready to make some tough decisions! And now that you're CEO, try doing something about the food!



- Offer air service to over 80 major & minor cities around the globe
- Select from 4 eras in aviation history including two futuristic scenarios
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Online Support offered on CompuServe: GO VIDPUB, Sect. 4





UNCHARTED WATERS NEW HORIZONS

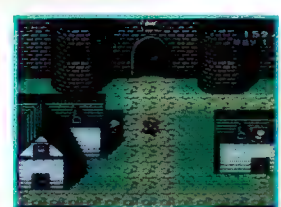
This game's more than some three-hour tour!

Imagine a time when mighty navies controlled the seven seas, ruthless pirates searched for hidden treasures and scholars argued that the Earth was round. Now, picture yourself as a young explorer on a mission that will carry you to the four corners of the globe.

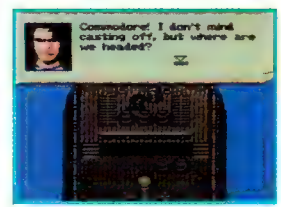
Play the son of a Portuguese Duke out to discover the legendary land of Atlantis, a Spanish female navy lieutenant turned pirate, a British privateer commissioned by Henry VIII to destroy the Spanish Armada, an Italian adventurer in debt to his father or a Turkish orphan starting his own trading business.

Your adventure will take you to over 130 exotic destinations, ranging from Mozambique on Africa's coast to Macao in the South Pacific. Along the way, you will discover exotic monuments, long sought treasures and valuable merchandise to trade. As captain of your fleet, keep a careful eye on the horizon for pirates eager to steal your valued cargo or an enemy navy at war with the flag your ship flies. Once in port, remember to recruit mates, purchase new ships and gunnery, gather useful information and settle disputes with your enemies by challenging them to a duel.

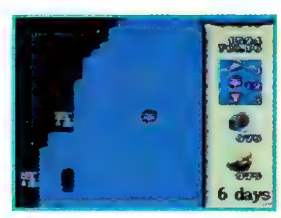
Get ready for the adventure of a lifetime. And remember, if you should get shipwrecked, it's always the skipper's fault!



Explore exotic ports for information and crew









As captain, give the order to cast off



Brave the open seas or use the coastline as your guide



-  Play one of six ambitious young heroes, each with their own scenario
-  Seek out more than 180 treasures, including rare animals and exotic monuments
-  Organize a powerful fleet with up to 25 different types of historical ships
-  While in port, explore the guild, bank, fortune-teller and Round Earth Society
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Evolution OR Extinction

by Arnie Katz & the EG Staff

Video Games Aren't Dead—Just Hibernating

"They're cutting the orders," said the panicked voice on the phone. Major retailers had cut holiday orders for the season's biggest releases by as much as two-thirds.

Suddenly, Christmas looked shaky after back-to-back growth years. It was the first solid evidence of the Big Fade. The 16-Bit video console was over the hill and headed for history.

Other proofs followed. Top toy chains dumped older and less successful carts as \$10 loss-leaders. The leading October cartridge introductions fizzled. **Shaq Attack**, **Sonic and Knuckles** and **The Tick** disappointed their publishers. Despite vigorous promotion by producer David Perry, **Earthworm Jim** fell orders of magnitude short of over-optimistic predictions. Game strategy book publishers actually pulled a few titles when advance orders fell too far short of expectations. Dark rumors of impending bankruptcies started to circulate through the e-mail grapevine.

Stories in *Newsweek*, *Time* and *The Wall Street Journal* harked back to the Great Crash of 1984. The end of the video game was again at hand. The craze was over.

These stories made fascinating reading. They'd have been more interesting if the content was either accurate or true. Looking back at the 1994 holiday season and ahead to the 1995 edition, it becomes clear that any burial is premature.

Problems exist, but they are solvable.

Some publishers will go broke or leave the business before the creditors take it all. But other companies are on track for a real record year.

An era *has* ended—but the next boom is already taking shape.

Video games are not dead.

Hard Times for Hardware

The 1994 holiday season gave manufacturers few reasons for jubilation, though they hunted hard for silver linings. Sega and Nintendo fought a war of words about which had the more outstanding performance, but they were smiling through the tears. The Yuletide brought little joy to either. Though last holiday season wasn't a complete disaster, it also was certainly not a rerun of 1993.

The unmistakable signs of the end of 16-Bit video gaming abounded. The mainstream media overreacted and misconstrued, but there was enough *real* bad news to put bite into doom-crying headlines.

Still-disputed retail sales figures indicate that 16-Bit hardware fell at least one-third. The Genesis dropped faster, but the SNES suffered nearly as much. Despite sharp price reductions to under \$100, sales of 16-Bit consoles will decline through 1995 and 1996 as Expert Consoles take over the market.

Console sales may continue at a low level for some time, much as did the recently retired NES. Genesis and SNES are no

longer the focus, but they'll hang on until Christmas 1996.

The deterioration is easy to understand. It is less a sudden dislike of 16-Bit machines than a heightened interest in hardware that is mostly not yet available. Dazzled by the Expert Consoles (3DO, Jaguar, CD-i and the forthcoming PlayStation, Sega Saturn and Ultra 64), gamers are reluctant to buy a system they believe is over the hill.

Hardware manufacturers have created a swamp of claims and counterclaims about the Expert Consoles. They can't agree on which are 32-Bit and which are 64-Bit—or whether that's still a meaningful way to measure systems.

It's hard to decide what to buy without reliable information. Many prospective consumers postponed the decision, or joined the throngs pushing computer sales up more than 33 percent during the fourth quarter.

The 32X upgrade for Genesis drew mixed reactions. Sega reports complete sell-through, though a compatibility problem with older TV sets (*see Hotline this issue*) caused 10 percent returns. **Virtua Racing**, **Star Wars Arcade** and **Doom** were the only games that made Christmas, so there wasn't much for 32Xers to buy. **Doom** was good, but **SWA** is based on a mediocre coin-op, and the Genesis **Virtua Racing** was only six months old. The 32X edition is certainly better, but it wasn't enough of a quality jump to motivate gaming consumers.

Several publishers, including Interplay, will support the 32X this year. Sega will introduce the Neptune, an all-in-one Genesis/32X combo at \$199. Viability may ultimately depend on how the Saturn is positioned.

Softening Software Demand

Attempts to deny the 16-Bit slump often cite the fact that video game cartridge sales were flat, not down. That's true, but misleading. The dollars were flat, but units rose. That's because a lot of troubled companies dumped unsold cartridges into the retail distribution channel. The video game industry can't afford to congratulate itself on selling carts for \$10 that cost \$20 to make.

Dumping turned out to be less serious than first feared. Cut-price carts accounted for no more than 23 percent of total fourth-quarter video game sales. Retailers can live with that, say experts, but the dumping level will be closely monitored in 1995.

In no sense did Americans reject video games. The demand for 16-Bit games plummeted, but some new releases did well. Sports proved a tower of strength despite the real-world baseball and hockey strikes. Titles like **Ken Griffey Baseball** and **Madden '95** scored good sales numbers.

Nintendo anticipated the soft Christmas market and offered retailers a take-back guarantee for **Donkey Kong Country**. Stores ordered enthusiastically, and gamers sent 6.5 million through checkstands in less than two months.

DKC became the worried retailer's life preserver. Many will cut back the size of their video game department for 1995, but the slump developed too quickly for such belt-tightening measures to affect the holiday season. Many chains and independents stocked up on **DKC** to keep the shelves full rather than investing in riskier cartridges.

DKC sold approximately eight times as many copies as the second-best seller (**Madden '95**). Its margin over the fifth-best seller (**Mortal Kombat II**) was a thunderous 25 to one. Even **Mortal Kombat** didn't have that kind of dominance. Retailers rode the big monkey to big profits, but factoring out **DKC** exposes the weakness in sales of top-ticket 16-Bit carts.

The Computer Boom

One common media mistake is to examine video gaming in isolation. It's one aspect of interactive electronic entertainment, which includes computer, coin-op and portable games.

Even the flap over the Pentium's floating decimal point couldn't stop computer hardware and software, most of it multimedia, from flying out of the stores. CD-ROM drives and packed multimedia systems are selling so well that even the prediction of 15 million installed by 1995 is looking a little conservative these days.

The million-seller CD-ROM disc has

arrived. Both **Seventh Guest** and **The Myst** are on the gold standard now. **Rebel Assault**, **SimCity 2000** and **Doom II** could join the select circle by the end of this year. As Barry Friedman, president of International Computer Group, told a Winter Consumer Electronics Show audience in January, "it is now easier to sell 100,000 CD-ROM discs than 50,000 cartridges."

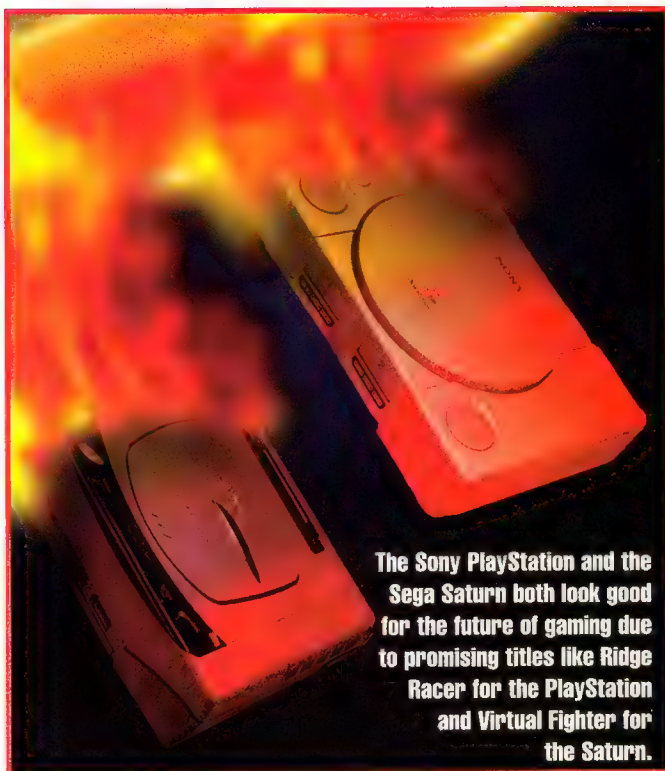
Donkey Kong Country was the season's unchallenged sales champ, but **Doom II** led all floppy disk games and was among CD-ROM leaders. The first-person, real-time action game, **Doom**, also did well on the Jaguar and 32X.

Doom II may not sell the predicted 2 million floppy disks, but it is rapidly approaching 1 million in sales. This is evidence that this game format is superceding the side-perspective, fighting contest, especially among older gamers. Dozens of such games are already in development for every platform, but expect several more hits in this genre—if a product glut doesn't zap consumer demand.

Who's Got the Mo?

"The year's biggest hit will be a 16-Bit video game," predicts Barry Friedman. He reasons that the audience for the Genesis and SNES won't be overtaken by competing platforms in 1995. That doesn't mean, however, that the Expert Consoles won't be making a lot of noise as they vie for their own market share.

It's hard to predict a winner at this stage, when the Ultra 64 and Saturn are still not nailed down. What can be done is survey where the five major competitors stand now. In short, which companies have momentum that might carry them through to victory? Let's look at the field:



The Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn both look good for the future of gaming due to promising titles like **Ridge Racer** for the PlayStation and **Virtual Fighter** for the Saturn.

3DO: Not only is it not dead, as you may've read elsewhere last spring, but it is carving a niche as the console for adult players. A good fourth quarter, a high software-to-hardware ratio (6+ to 1), tons of software and lots of energy from Gold Star and Panasonic have Trip Hawkins' crew in high gear. A likely survivor.

Jaguar: The system sold better than expected, thanks to several fine titles, including **Doom**. The new year brings more cartridges, a CD-ROM drive and a chance to erase retailers' skepticism.

CD-i: A testimony to persistence, this system has established itself as a family-oriented console, worldwide. It has plenty of entertainment, but it isn't a fullblown game machine.

Sony PlayStation: Despite video game inexperience, Sony is the odds-on favorite to become the leading Expert Console. It has hot hardware, an under-\$300 price tag, and a lot of smart executives. The best title in the first wave is a fighting game, which may not help, but at least it's a terrific fighting game.

Sega Saturn (Saturn): The expected price is, says Sega, "between \$300 and \$500." That's a lot of territory. **EG** expects it to come in around \$395-\$429. Will game enthusiasts pay for premium 64-Bit power? Sega doesn't expect Saturn to become a major factor in the market until 1996.

Ultra 64: The only cartridge-based expert system has had some design problems, but Nintendo still promises it in time for next Christmas. The relatively low price, coupled with a strong lineup of initial cartridges could give the Big N the leverage it needs to push Sega.

WHEN WORLDS DON'T COLLIDE

by Bill Kunkel

We've filled a lot of pages in this magazine with stories about the growing cross-fertilization—both successful and otherwise—between the filmmaking powerhouses and electronic gaming. Which came first is difficult to determine. It seemed as if one day there were suddenly a significant number of publishers—such as Rocket Science, Take 2 and Fox—arriving on the software scene covered in cinematic pixie dust (i.e., cash and hype) and high hopes, looking to jack in to the next big profit stream.

Meanwhile, the more experimental movers and shakers in the gaming world were already plucking A-list Hollywood talent to help add film-quality production values to interactive electronic entertainment with projects such as **Burn: Cycle** (Philips), **Demolition Man 3DO** (Virgin), and **Wing Commander III** (Origin).

The creation of Boss Games, however, adds a new twist to the mix. The company was originally spun off from Boss Film Studios, the creative child of four-time Oscar-winning special effects master Richard Edlund. Richard's pedigree is hot enough to fry eggs on; he earned his bones—not to mention personal Academy Awards—for his work on *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, while helping George Lucas create the legendary Industrial Light & Magic studio in the '70s. His studio, meanwhile, earned Oscars for the sfx for such hits as

Origin's *Wing Commander III* has set the standard for star power in a Sci-fi interactive video game.



Cliffhanger, *Batman Returns*, *Alien³*, *Die Hard*, *Poltergeist II* and *Ghostbusters*. These guys have done everything from the opening sequence to *Tales from the Crypt* (the Crypt Keeper's abode sits tucked casually away on a shelf in one of the Los Angeles-based studio's many strangely-constructed rooms) to the Bud Bowl television spots.

The company had also recently moved into yet another burgeoning area—motion-based simulator rides. At that point, the next step suddenly seemed much more obvious.

"Richard realized that they had so much talent, doing the rides and everything, that they could leverage it to create a game development business," explained Jim Bosler, the company's prez and CEO. Other key creative players in the game end of the business include Martin Rae, vice president operations, and a

key player because of his contacts with Nintendo; Colin Gordon, product development veep who became a legend in the business during his stints at Ocean and, especially, his era as development manager of Virgin Interactive Studios in London; and creative director Seth Mendelsohn, another ex-Virgin wunderkind whose knowledge of game play and development is among the most voluminous in the business.

Boss Games isn't rushing into anything—they don't see first product arriving for another year or so—but the platforms the company is currently focused on include the Ultra64, Sony PSX, Sega Saturn and PC-CD. Boss Enterprises is the holding company which includes both Boss Games and Boss Film. They're not interested in publishing, but in game development, "though we are looking to keep some ownership," Bosler adds.

Nobody's running toward a fixed deadline, but when Boss Games is ready to roll, given the company's incredible resources—from sfx wizardry to first-rate creative input—it should present a power to reckon with in the gaming universe.



APPLE BEARS NEW FRUIT

by Laurie Yates

Just when you thought it was safe to enter the game console waters; just as consumers and the press alike began to get comfortable with the notion of the video console wars settling into a half-dozen main players—Atari (the Jaguar), Nintendo (SNES and the promised Ultra64), Philips (CD-i), Sega (the various Genesis configurations and the forthcoming Saturn), Sony (the PSX) and 3DO—a computer powerhouse unexpectedly entered the fray with a hearty appetite and hopes of taking a sizable bite of the home console sweepstakes.

Apple Computer Company's new multimedia platform, at least temporarily dubbed the Pippin, is derived from the familiar Macintosh operating system and the PowerPC 603 microprocessor (which is supplied by Nippon Motorola Limited, a subsidiary of Motorola, Inc.). Pippin will be licensed to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) which will actually manufacture the players.

Apple anticipates that consumers will utilize the CD-ROM-based system, which connects to home television sets, for both education and entertainment titles that do not require any data entry beyond a standard console controller.

Lisa Byrne, an Apple spokesperson, observed that while "the Pippin is designed to fit into the market of Sega, Nintendo and 3DO, [the Pippin has] the additional feature of being able to play CD titles other than just games.

"One of the great features of this platform is that developers of existing

Macintosh multimedia titles will only have to make minor adjustments to [produce editions which are] compatible with the Pippin platform. This will expand the markets for developers of reference, game, entertainment and music multimedia titles."

The Pippin's appeal, Apple hopes, will reach consumers who could not otherwise afford the financial hit involved in investing in a full-blown computer system, but wants to take advantage of the all-important technology. At a tentative manufacturer's suggested retail price of \$500, Pippin's "a lot more than a game player, but a lot less [price-wise] than a personal computer," noted Ian Diery, Apple executive vice-president.

The first licensee for the platform is the Japanese game software and toy maker, Bandai Co. The Mighty Morphin Power Ranger powerhouse plans to market the Pippin platform under the name "Power Player." Bandai President Makoto Yamashina said his company is targeting worldwide sales of 500,000 to 1 million units a year.

By the Pippin launch date, Bandai and Apple expect to have approximately 50 titles available, and anticipate that all of these Pippin titles will be Macintosh CD-ROM compatible as well.

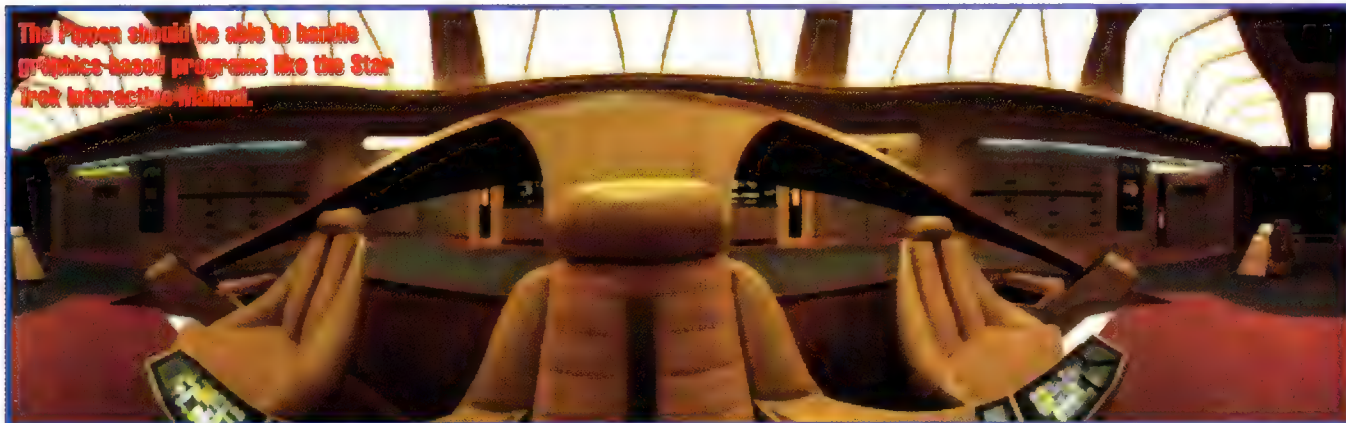
At the Winter Consumer Electronics



Show, EG was able to get a sneak peek at Apple's little wonder. With its sleek, streamlined appearance, Pippin is smaller than a 3DO, but larger than a Jaguar console—similar to the Japanese version of the PSX, but the model we viewed was black plastic. The Macintosh version of **Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Manual** (Simon & Schuster) which had been technically "tweaked" to run on the Pippin in less than two weeks, maintained its visual integrity on the new system and, on a standard 19" television, provides gamers with a size format they are accustomed to.

While the Apple-Bandai tag-team may not be an initial threat to existing platforms such as 3DO and Sega CD, for the right consumer, the Pippin may be the juiciest new piece of hardware for gamers to sink their teeth into during 1995.

The Pippin should be able to handle graphics-based programs like the Star Trek Interactive Manual.



VIRTUAL BOY

When Nintendo demonstrated Virtual Boy at the Shoshinkai Trade Show in Tokyo, Japan, reporters lit into it like sharks in a feeding frenzy. They attacked its red-on-black monochrome graphics, berated its game play, and dubbed it "Virtual Dog." American news wires carried stories predicting its demise.

The hybrid of portable game systems and virtual-reality optics, Virtual Boy may falter in the marketplace, but it's a promising game system that deserves a second look.

First of all, Virtual Boy creates astonishing 3-D effects. Nintendo executives never promised a portable system with SVGA graphics and stereo sound. They promised a near-virtual experience for around \$200. With two sets of precision controls for focusing to a player's eye configuration, Virtual Boy's 3-D-quality effects are even visible to people with poor depth perception. Its speedy processor and great game-controller create an immersive monochrome experience.

Single-color graphics, however, have been a hallmark of Nintendo's cost-efficient portable technology. With over 16 million units sold in the U.S., Game Boy is the most inadequate game system ever to succeed. The combined sales of the Sega Game Gear and the Atari Lynx, both color hand-held systems, amount to less than 7 million units.

Legitimate Gripes and Concerns

The complaint that Virtual Boy has little to do with virtual reality is legitimate: Virtual Boy does not sense head movement

and will not track the player's view. In fact, Nintendo's new goggles are little more than a sophisticated monitor.

The wire reports from Japan also expressed reasonable concern about Virtual Boy's play value. The kindest description of the games demonstrated in Tokyo called them "simple." Still others called them "dull" and "pathetic."

Answering complaints about poor game play, Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo manager of corporate communications, admits that the games Nintendo used to demonstrate Virtual Boy do not stack up. "We're still developing the software," says Kaplan. "We will have at least five games ready before release. These demonstration cartridges were never meant for retail."

According to Kaplan, Nintendo used two unfinished demonstration cartridges at Shoshinkai. The games, a first-person-perspective robot boxing simulation and a 3-D pinball table, were meant to highlight aspects of Virtual Boy's strengths. The pinball game shows Virtual Boy's three-dimensional graphics. Every detail of the table is clear and sharp. Playing this game, you quickly forget about its red-on-black graphics.

It's hard to tell what the boxing game highlighted. It's a very dull game in which you punch a nimble robot until it explodes in a flash of nuts and bolts. More sophisticated boxing games have appeared on every system, including Game Boy.

Hard-Sell Required

Nintendo may have lost this fight just by entering the ring. With PlayStation, Saturn, Ultra64 and other super systems on the near horizon, Nintendo will have trouble convincing consumers that a new portable system with single-color graphics represents new technology.

The 3-D goggles create another problem. Unlike the portable Game Boy which you can play anywhere, Virtual Boy is played sitting at a table with the goggles perched on a stand.



The price will provide the ultimate test. Scheduled to retail at \$200, Virtual Boy costs more than twice as much as Game Gear and four times as much as Game Boy. History shows that consumers do not like to spend \$200 on game machines. After Nintendo answers reporters' concerns, the final question will be, "Are consumers willing to give Virtual Boy a chance?"
(Steven L. Kent)



Gaming Without

By Deborah
Quilter

How gamers can confront and defeat the unseen dangers of Repetitive Stress Syndrome

If someone told you that one of your daily activities could lead to a permanent disability—making it hard for you to brush your teeth or tie your shoes—you'd probably discontinue that activity, right?

But what if that activity were playing computer games? Then what would you do?

At first glance, it may not seem like simply sitting in front of a computer with a mouse or keyboard could lead to Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), a debilitating disease affecting the hand, arm, neck or shoulder. But that is exactly the case—in fact, because of the long hours they spend in front of the monitor, game players can have a higher risk for RSI than their computer-using colleagues. RSI has now reached epidemic proportions: It accounts for more than 60 percent of all workplace illnesses, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent data shows that 281,800 new cases of RSI were diagnosed in 1992. Computer games offer all of the ingredients necessary to contract RSI that regular computing does: speed, repetition, holding still, awkward positioning and faulty technique.

Repetitive Strain Injury is a scary disease, because by the time most people feel pain, a lot of damage can happen to the muscles, tendons and nerves. While becoming injured is easy, getting better can take many months of rehabilitation. So the thing to do is prevent RSI in the first place.

To get an idea of how people play electronic games, I headed to my local Software Etc. on Manhattan's Upper West Side and hailed the first two gamers I saw:

would they be willing to let me observe them play?

Joel Lee, an aspiring animator, and

Heriberto (or Eri, sounds like "Eddie") Perez agreed to meet me at Eri's Harlem apartment for a demonstration of **Doom II** the next day.

Joel and Eri made perfect gaming guides: They were both knowledgeable, enthusiastic techno-wizards. Eighteen-year-old Joel started using computers at age eight. Ever since he saw the movie *Tron*, he has been working with animation, and he wants to make it his career after college. Eri, a 23-year-old computer science student at La Guardia Community College, started gaming at 15. Both have high performance, high-end systems; and Eri had built his own.

When I arrived for our appointment, escorted through the neighborhood's lively streets by the gallant Joel, Eri ushered us straight into his room and loaded **Doom II**.

"I can take ultra-violent," Eri declared.

"No!" Joel protested.

But Eri prevailed, and blew away one enemy after another with his weapon of choice: the double-barreled shotgun. Eri's hands danced over the keyboard: He had all the id commands memorized. Hurried on by the groans of wounded monsters in death throes, Eri played hard against the computer, occasionally shouting at it over the sound of music and gunfire.

Two hours quickly passed as Eri and Joel took turns playing. While Eri and Joel watched the action on the screen, I looked at their hands and forearms and necks and spines.

At the end of the session, I explained what I saw in terms of computer technique. Both of them had experienced hand pain. Joel says he sometimes wakes up with wrist pain and was worried about a "knot" at the top of his left hand. Eri also complained of periodic pain in his hands and occasional difficulty holding on to things.

After seeing them play, it was no wonder they had complaints: Like most computer users (and the general public), they had no idea how to care for their hands. Joel and Eri were both computer athletes, only they didn't warm up, take breaks or pay attention to form like their Olympian counterparts would.

Eri was a "rester," that is, he let his wrists rest on the edge of the table while he used the trackball and mouse.

Eri had pretty good posture when he worked at the keyboard. He tended not to use the back rest, and kept his ears in line with

his shoulders and his spine straight. (He said he learned this in boot camp.)

When he used the Gravis joystick, however, he let his spine collapse as he sat, a problem that was compounded by his chair, which reclined when he leaned back.

"Lounging" causes a lot of problems, because then you have to crane your neck forward to see the screen, which strains your neck muscles. Eri also held his pinkie and forefinger up while he typed. "Pointing" your fingers like this strains muscles and tendons.

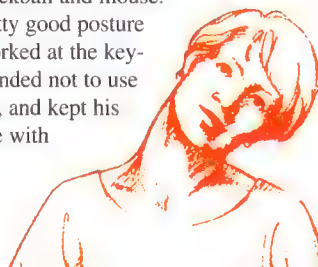
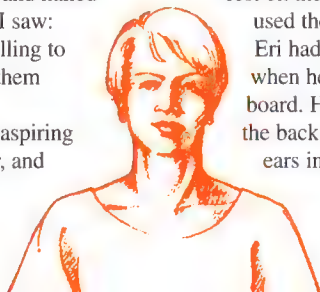
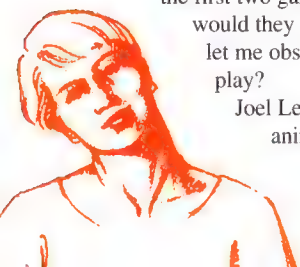
Joel also rested his wrists and lounged. Joel, who was a good deal taller than Eri, lounged in part because he had to lower his head to view the screen.

These habits—lounging, wrist-resting and pointing—are all very damaging to the nerves, muscles and tendons of the hand and arm. RSI comes from repeating awkward movements over and over again, such as gripping a mouse or a joystick, pounding a keyboard or sitting for hours on end in a chair that doesn't support good posture. But playing a game occasionally—even with bad habits—won't hurt you if you only play once a year. The problem comes when you add the dimension of time.

Let's say you're 25 years old. You started hacking when you were 15. You got so good at it that today you're working as a programmer. You like what you're doing, so you log lots of computer hours on the job, maybe 20 to 30 hours a week. To unwind, you go home and play computer games or your guitar for a few hours. So maybe your total hand-intensive daily activity is pushing 40 or 50 hours or more a week. That 10 years of intense strain on your hands adds up, especially when you consider that it only takes two to four hours of computer use per day to put you in the danger zone for RSI. According to a recent survey by the Software Publishers Association, people spend an average of four hours a day at their home computers. Nearly half of those surveyed played computer games.

There are two elements that make electronic games even more dangerous than regular computing. First of all, they are very engrossing. Players tend to get so absorbed in the action they don't realize how much time has passed since they started to play. "I've played till 3 a.m.," one gamer confessed. "You get trapped inside these puzzles—anybody's who's got any fighting instinct at all wants to win."

Another gamer, Jaime Siegel, a 29-year-old aerospace engineer turned patent litigation attorney, often stays up until 1 a.m. (though his wife Amy adds an hour to his





estimate). If he gets a new game, he frequently tells himself, "Okay, one more turn, then I'm going to sleep," he said. The trouble is, one more turn leads to one more turn.

The second big problem with the games are the controls. Mice, trackballs and hand-held joysticks are especially dangerous because they automatically compromise the hand's action. A safer choice is the throttle-style joystick that allows the hand to be in a more natural handshake position and initiate movement from the shoulder joint but doesn't encourage you to rest your forearm or wrist. This doesn't mean you never have to take breaks or pay attention to your posture, however. You have to look at the whole picture with RSI.

Your Workstation

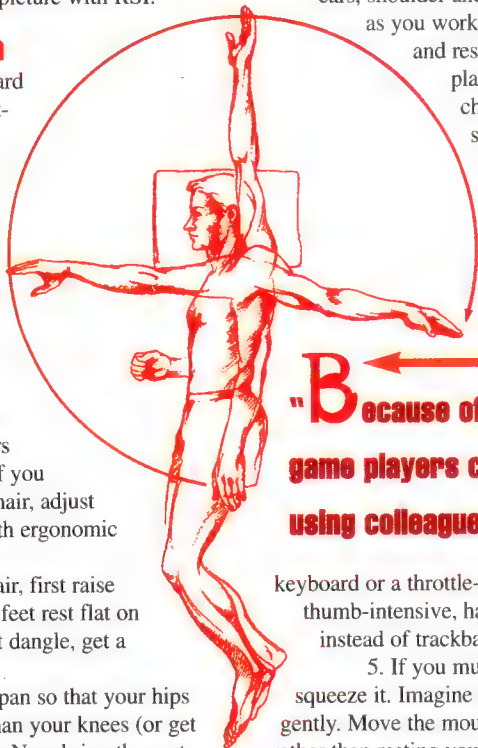
The first step toward preventing RSI is setting up the workstation correctly. Start with the chair. You should invest in the best chair you can buy, because if it doesn't support you properly, you will sit for hours in a strained position. Don't skimp on this. There are good chairs available for \$400. If you can't afford a new chair, adjust the one you have with ergonomic cushions.

To adjust your chair, first raise the seat so that your feet rest flat on the floor. If your feet dangle, get a footrest.

Next, tilt the seat pan so that your hips are slightly higher than your knees (or get a pelvic tilt cushion). Now bring the seat back in to support your lower spine. Be sure your chair back doesn't rock backward—it must lock in place to support your back.

Now lower your keyboard tray so that your forearms are parallel to the floor when you use the mouse, controller or keyboard. If you are using a mouse or joystick, put it directly in front of your shoulder, not over to the side.

Place the monitor directly in front of you. The top of the monitor should be level with your eyes. Tilt the monitor back as though you were reading a book (unless this creates glare).



Technique
Using good technique is one of the best favors you can do for yourself. You can avoid a lot of pain and problems if you'll just follow a few simple rules.

1. *Never* rest your wrist or forearm on anything—wrist rest, desk edge or arm rest—while you use a keyboard, joystick, mouse or trackball. Resting can damage the delicate tendons and muscles of the forearm. Move your mouse (or joystick) from the shoulder. Rest your arms only when you are not playing.

2. Don't slouch. Maintaining proper posture is essential to preventing injury. Keep your ears, shoulder and spine in a straight line as you work. Sit back occasionally and rest when you are *not*

playing. If you have chronically poor posture, see a physical therapist or enroll in a postural retraining program.

3. Let your elbows relax at your side rather than wing away from your torso.

4. Use the

"Because of the long hours they spend in front of the monitor, game players can have a higher risk for RSI than their computer-using colleagues."

keyboard or a throttle-style joystick (not the thumb-intensive, hand-held models) instead of trackball or mouse.

5. If you must use a mouse, don't squeeze it. Imagine it is a bird, and hold it gently. Move the mouse from the shoulder rather than resting your forearm on the table.

6. Don't whack the trackball. This is like jumping on a concrete floor. Use the lightest touch possible when you move it.

7. Pace yourself. You should take a five-to-10 minute break for every half hour at the game. One break per hour should be used for stretching specific areas, such as the forearm muscles.

Computer Exercises

To avoid injury, stretch often—at least once an hour. Here are a few easy exercises:

1. Lift your shoulders to your ears and

squeeze for a few seconds. Then let them drop.

2. Slowly roll your shoulders up, back and down several times.

3. Lace your fingers together and then lift them up, palms to ceiling, and stretch.

4. With your palms facing out and fingers pointing up, pretend you are pushing against two walls at either side of you.

5. With your palms together (as in prayer) push your hands down to stretch the flexor muscles.

6. With one arm extended in front of you, shoulders relaxed, make a fist and gently pull it toward you with your other hand to stretch the extensor muscles.

7. With shoulders relaxed, gently look to the right. Hold a few seconds. Repeat to the left side.

8. With shoulders relaxed, gently pull your chin down to your chest. Don't strain. Hold a few seconds.

9. Stand up. Lace your hands behind your back and pull up gently to stretch your chest muscles.

10. Stand in a corner, about a foot away from the wall. Put both of your *whole* forearms on either wall and lean in to the corner. Do not bounce. This is not a push-up; you should feel a good stretch in your chest muscles.

Warning Signs of RSI

Symptoms and warning signs of RSI can appear in your fingers, wrists, forearms, upper arms, shoulder and neck. Symptoms can migrate from one area to another. If you experience symptoms of RSI, such as numbness or tingling; pain in the hands, forearms, neck or shoulder; clumsiness or a sense of fatigue or heaviness, seek qualified medical

help as soon as possible. RSI can cause permanent disability if it is not treated early.

Today, Eri Perez is a lot more careful about his hands. In addition to avoiding resting his wrists while he plays, Eri lowered his keyboard. "I try to sit straight in my chair," he added.

Eri's got the right idea. Don't take chances with Repetitive Strain Injury. Beyond a certain point, an injury becomes chronic and can continually flare up again, creating a vicious cycle of recovery and relapse. Prevention is the most effective way of avoiding problems. RSI could devastate your career as well as end all future gaming, so don't take any chances with your hands.

Deborah Quilter is co-author, with Emil Pascarelli, M.D., of *Repetitive Strain Injury: A Computer User's Guide* (John Wiley & Sons, 1994).

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PENN & TELLER'S

MAGIC TRICKS

by Russ Ceccola

If Penn & Teller had written this article, they would surely show you how to trick a friend, perform a stunt or cause some trouble. That's exactly the type of behavior people expect of the oddball couple who, for almost 20 years, have been doing magic tricks, stunts and comedy routines for audiences all over the world.

Now the two guys who welcomed the comparison to Beavis and Butt-head (made by an unnamed famous magician a while back) have their revenge with the first video game to ever pull scams and perform tricks in one's living room. **Penn & Teller's Smoke and Mirrors** is less of a video game and more of the type of interactive experience that people expect from CD-ROM games.

Unlike most celebrities who license their image and retain final approval in the production of a game based on them (but don't do much more), Penn & Teller tirelessly worked on their game for three months. And that was just the time spent on the creative sessions—the video segments were actually shot separately.

"We worked on the game hard. We went over every sentence, every bit. I'm hoping that is a big thing to people," said Penn Jillette, the tall, wild-haired, incredibly expressive and articulate half of the duo who sports one fingernail painted red.



The game was designed in the summer of 1993 and the video segments were filmed sometime later. Absolute built a bluescreen studio in their New Jersey offices and filmed quite a variety of clips for the game. Penn & Teller introduce each of the game segments and also help to set up scams and mislead players. It's almost too close for comfort to have Penn & Teller in control of a Sega CD system.



Game designer Barry Marx, himself a tall, witty, sarcastic wise guy with a wicked sense of humor, tried to do the unthinkable—design something new for video games. The result is a major coup. **Smoke and Mirrors**, the product, is a collection of Penn & Teller gimmicks, minigames and **Smoke and Mirrors**, the video game, the closest the package gets to traditional video gaming.

"I wanted to get away from the side-scrolling, character-action games that we have done in the past and everyone else is doing. I also wanted to do something that had a built-in marketing appeal," said Marx. "We wanted to take video gaming in general and twist it all up, just like Penn & Teller do on stage. Some scams and tricks were specifically tailored to the video game machine and controllers." As other versions of the game are released, Absolute plans to redesign the interface to fully take advantage of whatever input device people use.

Twisting the game format to fit well was exactly what Marx and Penn & Teller did in those long creative sessions. **Smoke and Mirrors** is full of totally original bits and humor that make people laugh out loud rather than merely chuckle. Penn & Teller are funny just to watch, but when their brand of humor permeates every aspect of an interactive, multiple-



know much about the team will quickly find out what they're made of—and it's not sugar and spice! Teller routinely produces needles from his mouth in the live show. In the **Smoke and Mirrors** video game, one of Teller's talents involves needles, while Penn swallows any swords that are in the way. Cockroaches, chipper-shredders, bear traps and other gimmicks from their show also populate the game. Even Mofo the Psychic Gorilla guesses a randomly selected card that a player picks from a deck. The video segments even involve some of Penn & Teller's friends (Debbie Harry, Lou Reed, etc.) in appearances, making **Smoke and Mirrors** pure Penn & Teller from top to bottom. Just don't smash the monitor when Mofo really does guess your chosen card.

Even the electronic version of Penn & Teller's talented ape retains some of the abilities of his real-life counterpart.

presentation product like **Smoke and Mirrors**, they're even better. Marx affirmed that it was a pleasure to work on a game and "to be truly interactive with people who are this creative and this hip."

Penn offered that "we'll do anything that looks like it's fun. **Smoke and Mirrors** was tremendously fun. We'd do another in a second." Teller, of course, had no comment.

Penn & Teller aficionados will especially like the various gimmicks, talents, stunts and references to past Penn & Teller live shows and appearances that are present throughout the product. Those who don't

Don't get too close to the TV set—it's rumored that those fellows figured out a way for electrons to jump off the screen and shock the nearest person.

But seriously, the combination of Penn & Teller, multimedia and video games is something long overdue and yet another way to enjoy this exciting, completely unique comedy/magic act.



The Games Themselves

Smoke and Mirrors begins with an introduction from Penn & Teller and a menu from which players can choose one of the minigames, magic tricks or the **Smoke and Mirrors** video game itself. **Smoke and Mirrors**, the game, is the only "normal" element of the product. One or two players cooperatively control Penn & Teller as they make their way from Times Square in New York to Las Vegas to debunk Stalkworth and Kib, a pair of magicians who claim that magic is real.

The Penn & Teller characters were superscoped from their real world careers, and each have special abilities that allow them to confirm identities, plate spinners, freeze jellyfish and other amuseurs who waste their time. Besides the aforementioned Mofo the Psychic Gorilla, who guesses a randomly selected playing card, **Smoke and Mirrors** also features a segment in which Penn & Teller pass a person's sign. The minigames, **Buzz Bombers** and **Sun Searcher**, will satisfy

players' appetites for action games. In **Sun Searcher**, Penn & Teller have devised a way to make the screen dance across to music. This used to seem to be believed.

The most incredible segment of the product is still **Desert Bus**. Never before has anyone bothered for IBM to design a bus simulation. The object is to drive a bus with a top speed of 45 MPH from Tucson to Las Vegas in real time (about eight hours). When players get to Vegas, they earn a point. If they make the return trip, they get another point—and so on. If they overheat their bus, the bus gets towed back to the starting city—in real time! **Desert Bus** is the most ridiculous game ever designed, but those who play it might just win a reward. A contest surrounding the minigame will feature a real bus trip from Tucson to Las Vegas with Penn & Teller for the player or players with the highest score. So get the coffee ready, because there is no way to program the controller on autopilot!

Interview with Penn Jillette

Penn Jillette recently spoke for the first time about **Smoke and Mirrors** to *Electronic Games* right before a chipper-shredder stunt and an appearance on David Letterman's show. Jillette doesn't have much time to play video games, but recognized that the ones he has seen "are a different, nonlinear way to experience art." The entire design experience was a blast for the team and involved "lots of doughnuts and lots of coffee—just like real programmers."

Penn & Teller took the same approach to the game as they do to their other products and shows, but Jillette confessed that "**Smoke and Mirrors** design phase was even more creative than some of our live stuff, but it still feels to me like a live show or movie."

Desert Bus was also a topic of conversation. Jillette came up with the minigame because he felt that none of the other simulations out there are at all real. "People can imagine driving a bus," he joked. "The stuff that people say about video games makes me furious. So we decided to make a game that mimics real life—**Desert Bus**. It's a great joke and one of the most political things we've ever done, directed at those idiots who put down games. It's rock 'n' roll all over again. Here's a non-violent, non-action video game for you—now shut up!"

Like the man said, **Desert Bus** is proof of the need for action in video games.

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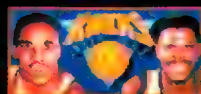
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Making a Good First Impression

In the recent past, evolution of the video standards used by programmers revolved around expansion of the color palette.

This type of visual enhancement naturally has a finite limit. After all, how many users can look at a game that uses 16 million colors and differentiate it from one that uses 256 million colors? As such, the next logical step in the quest for ultimate suspension of disbelief has been 3-D rendering.

Despite tremendous improvements in texture mapping, lighting and shading, 3-D continues to be plagued with one recurring problem: slow frame rates. Consequently, as detailed as some 3-D models may be, we cannot suspend our disbelief because they are not presented to us at speeds that our senses expect to encounter. We explore these alien environments in slow motion, or we would if game designers made them as detailed as they could be.

Because of hardware restrictions that will be explained shortly, the current generation of highly visual games are still chopped down from their full potential so they can run at acceptable frame rates. In other words, game designers are hobbled from doing all that they are capable of because the public will not accept games that bog down during heavy animation sequences. The new Matrox cards solve some of these design dilemmas, which fling new doors open to programmers. Before examining the long-term potential for gamers, let's explore in-depth both the problem and the solution.

Very basically, the 3-D process consists of four things: coordination of transformations, clipping, lighting and rendering. The rendering portion is what slows the process down. It requires that operations be performed on a per pixel basis, which is taxing on even the fastest of today's processors. Matrox has designed the MGA Athena chip to rectify

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MGA Impression Plus
Matrox (MSRP \$449.00)

MGA Impression Lite
Matrox (MSRP \$369.00)

matrox

this bottleneck in the process. The Athena chip incorporates a high performance GUI accelerator, a 3-D rendering engine and a 32-Bit direct connect PCI interface. Consequently, by removing the demand for pixel calculations from the CPU chip, the Matrox architecture acts as a tremendous force multiplier to total system performance.

Matrox has incorporated this chip on their new line of MGA (Matrox Graphics Architecture) Impressions Graphics Accelerator cards for ISA and VESA Local Bus computers. The new line contains two outstanding offerings, MGA Impressions Lite and MGA Impressions Plus. Either of these is a worthwhile investment in the future productivity of your machine. With more than 30 international awards of excellence and recent bundling agreements with such companies as Compaq, Gateway, Hewlett Packard and Digital, MGA may prove to be the new benchmark in graphics acceleration. While at present you will mainly enjoy the benefits of these accelerators in your Windows and CAD applications, imagine sitting in the cockpit of your favorite flight simulator gaining sky on an elusive, exquisitely

rendered Foxbat or perhaps a Hind.

In other words, you may not notice a significant difference in how **Doom II** runs on your machine with one of these babies driving your monitor, but you will soon see games designed to take advantage of their power. Two games produced by 47-tek, **Sento** and **Creep Clash**, access the MGA's 3-D hardware through the Criterion's RenderWare API. Amorphous Design's **IceHawk** and Velocity's **Spectre MGA** also have built-in support for the Impressions series. Moses Ma, founder and Chairman of Velocity Incorporated, had this to say, "The MGA allows applications such as **Spectre** to reach superior levels of performance, bringing real-time 3-D to the end user. It delivers a lot of power at an incredibly low price."

As mentioned, this new board comes in two flavors, Lite and Plus. Both offer exceptional performance when used with Windows and CAD applications. The Impressions Lite is the economy version of the series. But do not let "economy" fool you. It packs quite a punch with resolutions as high as 1280 x 1024 in 256 colors (8-Bit) and video playback as fast as 15 fps at a

maximum resolution of 960 x 720. With 2 MB of VRAM (non-upgradeable) and support for Windows 3.1, Windows NT and OS/2, it should offer power and flexibility for all but the most intensive graphics users.

If, however, you find that you need even more bang for your buck, you can pick up the Impression Plus. The Plus has the same 2 MB VRAM as its little brother but is expandable to 4 MB. It also provides maximum resolutions as high as 1600 x 1200 (8-Bit) and an impressive video playback of 30 fps with resolutions as high as 1280 x 1024.

Matrox provides full support for such 3-D APIs as Intel's 3DR, HOOPS, Criterion RenderWare and RenderMorphics RealityLab. Richard Wirt, director of software technology at Intel Corporations Software Technology Lab, said, "Intel Corporation is committed to bringing new capabilities into the mainstream desktop market, including 3-D graphics. Intel's 3DRender (3DR), a standard 3-D programming interface for Windows, is helping to develop a wide range of new 3-D applications. Matrox Graphics Inc.'s new MGA Impression Plus accelerator offers impres-

sive 3-D performance and will greatly boost the performance of 3DR-based applications. We are pleased to see this first PCI-based 3-D accelerator brought to the market." According to Matrox, support for 3-D acceleration of OpenGL with 3-D DDI will be available in the first quarter of 1995.

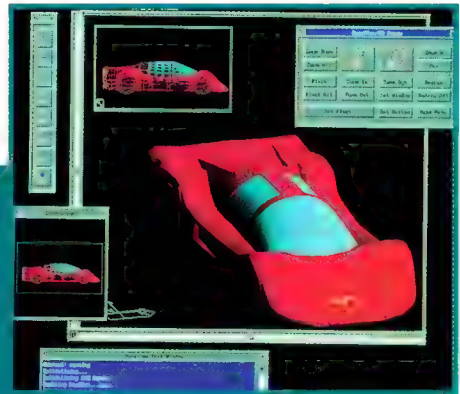
The system requirements are basic and easy to meet: ISA or VESA Local bus computer with a 386, 486 or Pentium micro-processor. A minimum of 4 MB of RAM is also required. The operating system requirement is DOS version 5 and later. With the Supplementary Drivers' package (available separately) you can also run OS/2 PM Version 2.1 or Windows NT.

Some of the technical features are a 64-Bit VGA-compatible drawing engine, BT485 RAMDAC or TI 3020 RAMDAC with hardware cursor, composite and separate sync monitors supported, and VGA is bootable in 8- or 16-Bit configurations (ISA boards only).

The MGA may be installed for either single- or dual-screen operation. Dual-screen refers to using a separate VGA adapter for one monitor and the MGA board for high-

resolution display on another monitor. This is done by daisy-chaining your video cards through a ribbon cable attached to the VGA feature connectors found near the top of most cards. This mode is supported by all drivers, but the MGA's built-in VGA must be disabled and the memory map must be moved from the default area to any other valid address blocks.

During setup, Display Power Management Signaling (DPMS) is copied to your machine. DPMS is a VESA standard program that utilizes a hardware mechanism for controlling the power consumption of any VESA DPMS compliant monitor. When the system detects that your monitor has not been accessed by your graphics adapter after a user defined period of time, it shuts down your monitor (to a specified level) until activity is again detected, which helps reduce power consumption and screen burn-in on your monitor.



Software Features

MGA PowerDesk Features for Windows

- Instant ModeSWITCH on-the-fly resolution and color depth switching
- PixelTOUCH hardware pan and zoom
- QCDP true color dithering
- Virtual Desktop sizes up to 1600 x 1200
- Monitor Selection and Installation within Windows
- Center Pop-Up and Center Window
- MaxVIEW
- PanLock
- Quick Access

MGA DynaView 2-D Features for DOS

- Real-time Spy Glass and Bird's Eye Views
- Windows-like Scroll and Zoom Bars
- Resizeable and positionable Main Window
- Programmable pop-up Iconic Menus and Tool Bar

MGA DynaView 3-D Features for DOS

- Interactive 3-D movement and rotation
- Instantaneous Gouraud shaded rendering

Optimized AutoCAD for Windows

- 3-D Viewer for real-time manipulation
- Bird's Eye and real-time Spy Glass views

Windows resolutions and Colors

1600 x 1200	256, 65K
1280 x 1024	256, 65K, 16.7M
1152 x 882	256, 65K, 16.7M
1024 x 768	256, 65K, 16.7M
800 x 600	256, 65K, 16.7M
640 x 480	256, 65K, 16.7M

Items in bold require 4MB of VRAM

Maximum Refresh Rates

Resolution	V. Frequency	H. Frequency			
1600 x 1200	60 - 70 Hz	85Hz	76	82 KHz	95KHz
1280 x 1024	60 - 90 Hz	110Hz	63	95 KHz	105KHz
1152 x 882	60 - 100 Hz	120Hz	54	92 KHz	110KHz
1024 x 768	60 - 120 Hz	120Hz	48	76 KHz	96KHz
800 x 600	60 - 120 Hz	200Hz	37	76 KHz	
640 x 480	60 - 120 Hz	200Hz			

Items in bold require 220 MHz DAC option

Real-Time 3D Wireframe

1600 x 1200	256
1280 x 1024	256
1152 x 882	256, 65K
1024 x 768	256, 65K
800 x 600	256, 65K, 16.7M
640 x 480	256, 65K, 16.7M

Items in bold require 4MB VRAM

Real-Time 3-D Gouraud Shading and Color Depths

1600 x 1200	
1280 x 1024	
1152 x 882	256
1024 x 768	256
800 x 600	256, 65K
640 x 480	256, 65K

Items in bold require 4 MB VRAM

Matrox provides PowerDrivers for Major GUI (Graphical User Interface) environments such as Windows 3.1 (which also support Windows for Workgroups, Chicago and Pen for Windows), as well as customized DynaView 2-D and 3-D ADI drivers for AutoCAD releases 11 and 12 and 3-D Studio Version 2.0 and 3.0.

Supplementary drivers are available on request and provide support for Windows NT (including a version for the DEC Alpha AXP system), OS/2 PM 2.1, and MicroStation PC. WinSqueeze! JPEG compression program and Consistent Color monitor calibration software are also available with this package.

The MGA control panel, a Windows 3.1 application, provides simple configuration at the touch of a button. The control panel must be left open (minimized) at all times in order to track the ModeSWITCH and PixelTOUCH hotkeys. The MGA icon also tells you what mode you are in and the size of the virtual desktop.

Instant ModeSWITCH allows you to change your Windows display resolution and color depth on the fly. The advantage of this is that switching is immediate and all your applications remain open because Windows isn't actually restarted. You can configure four predefined display modes for use in Windows, each with its own hotkey that is also user definable. Virtual desktop allows your current monitor to give you virtual resolutions up to 1600 x 1200 independent of the actual screen display, and PixelTOUCH gives you hotkey-driven pan and zoom (1X, 2X and 4X) in Windows. 4X is unavailable at resolutions of 800 x 600 and lower. MGA's QCDP (Quality Color Dithering Process) gives you true-color emulation using a dithered palette for 8-Bit color modes to achieve near true-color image quality at high-resolution modes. A DOS driver for AutoCAD releases 11, 12 and 3-D Studio versions 2.0 and 3.0 runs in Protected Mode and is fully compatible with ADI 4.2. This DynaView driver offers high resolution, display list operation with dynamic Bird's Eye and Spy Glass views, customizable menus, pop-up windows and real-time 3-D.

The AutoCAD for Windows driver offers direct board access bypassing Windows GDI, giving you even faster redraws and zooms. This driver includes the Matrox Viewer, which provides access to extra commands including real-time Spy Glass and Matrox Zoom Dynamic. MGA supports all nineteen standard VGA modes and Matrox also provides their mgavesa.com, a terminate and stay resident program that allows you to run

Performance Specifications*

Vectors**	Maximum Rendering Speeds
2-D flat, patterned	940K vectors/sec
3-D patterned, shaded with 7	430K vectors/sec
3-D Patterned, shaded anti-aliased	233K vectors/sec

Polygons***	Maximum Rendering Speeds
2-D flat, dithered	690K polygons/sec
2-D flat, patterned, dithered	625K polygons/sec
3-D shaded, Z-buffered, 16bpp color dithered	150K polygons/sec
Peak speed: shaded, dithered, 16bpp color large triangles with Z	25M pixels/sec

BitBLT's and Fills	Maximum rendering Speeds
Source destination BLT	70 Mpixels/sec
Color Expansion BLT	182 Mpixels/sec
8x8 Fill Pattern	230 Mpixels/sec
Solid Fill	850 Mpixels/sec

Text	Maximum Rendering Speeds
2-D 16x16 pixel	200K characters/sec
2-D antialiased text	43K characters/sec
2-D 16x16 transparent bit	80K characters/sec

WinBench 4.0 Scores	Maximum Rendering Speeds
1024x768x8	45 million Winmarks
800x600x24	35 million Winmarks

* MGA Impression Plus 4 MB PCI on a Pentium 100 with 32 MB RAM and 512K caching version 2.01 driver.

** Vectors are 10 pixels long, unconnected and drawn in any direction.

*** Polygons are 50 pixel mean shaped triangles.

programs and games that utilize six VESA Super VGA display modes (based on Standards version 1.2) ranging from 640 x 400 x 256 to 1024 x 768 x 256.

The MGA Impression line achieves its amazing performance by incorporating a BitBLT engine, 2-D and 3-D line and polygon drawing, hardware Z Buffering, Gouraud shading, double buffering, anti-aliasing, translucency, color dithering, color expansion and a hardware cursor. Programmable pixel clocks operate at up to 220 MHz and hardware support is provided to assist texture mapping. The cards excel on 3-D applications such as AutoCAD and 3-D Studio.

Video playback in Windows has been improved in two ways. First a Microsoft DCI compliant driver can exploit the hardware "stretchblt" capability of MGA to provide higher frame rates at larger picture sizes. Second, MGA incorporates hardware hooks to support video coprocessors such as VideoLogic's PowerPlay64. The PowerPlay64 provides hardware color space conversion and image scaling with high-quality filters to further improve video frame rates as well as image quality. Consequently, users can expect improved performance for games that incorporate a

good deal of digitized live action as well.

"Great," you say, "but we've seen other video boards touted then not supported, how do we know this will be any different?"

The answer lies in examination of the manufacturer agreements. In the aggregate, these manufacturers control a substantial portion of the PC market. This means that the Matrox line will become ever more common peripherals in desktop machines. Once the market base has been established, players can rest assured that game designers will take full advantage to produce software that is more graphically intensive and visually enthralling than anything seen thus far. Matrox seems to have provided us with the best of both worlds, work and play.

By purchasing one of these cards, either individually or as a system component, users are making a sound investment in the future of video technology. Further, given the relatively small price differential and greater expandability of the MGA Impression Plus, it seems the more logical choice for long-term investors. Do you want a glimpse of the future of gaming? You need look no further than here!

.....
by Ed Dille

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THE NET

Time to Go from Prosaic to Mosaic

The Internet has been the star of many a media feeding frenzy in the last year. But to anyone who innocently tries to get on this new superstar of the infomedia landscape, the Internet wears a hat that is decidedly tinged with black.

The simple fact is that the Internet, in its telnet and FTP command-line-driven incarnation, is one of the hardest sections of popular computing to get the hang of. The reason for this is simple: The Internet was never intended to be a popular computing forum.

Designed by and for hardcore tech-heads, the Internet was built to allow researchers to communicate new findings. As such, all the people using the net were *expected* to be rocket scientists. Obviously, all this has changed with the Internet frenzy that has gone down in the last 24 months. Part of the reason is that a generation of young adults who were raised with computing from day one are growing into their own.

The rantings about the Information Superhighway from the vice president haven't helped a lot either. It isn't that Gore's vision doesn't have its good points but that he is touting an information superhighway where there isn't much but a loose connection of county roads. To be frank, it is unlikely that there is going to be much more for at least five years, maybe 10.

Well, while the marketing rap might be a bit premature, we do have one great thing to tune into in the meantime: Mosaic and the World Wide Web. The WWW was the brainchild of some of those hardcore bitheads we were discussing earlier, this group stationed at the CERN physics facility in France. The CERN researchers wanted to be able to make a networked database of physics articles and information that worked on the hypertext principle on a global network,



namely riding on the Internet. For those who aren't hip to hypertext, open any Windows application and bring up the help. See how you can jump around anywhere you want by just hitting any of the highlighted keywords with the mouse? Hypertext.

This is also a pretty clever way to do research. If you are looking in one document, instead of going to a footnote to find the original source material, you simply click on the keyword and get taken straight to the document you need. Bright idea.

It would still be pretty dry, because the Internet is basically a text forum. There are ways to transmit pictures, but you have to download them and then run an app to see them on your end. Very unhip and time consuming. So a group of bright kids at the U.S. National Center for Supercomputing Applications decided to build a piece of software to browse the WWW and add pictures. That piece of software was named Mosaic, and a net revolution was born.

Mosaic isn't the most elegant piece of

software ever written, but it does do something that nothing else has managed to date: It makes the Internet easy. As a great side-effect, it makes it sexy, with pictures and font selectability to boot.

Instead of complicated command lines and addresses, Mosaic comes up with a fully mousable screen. Users start on what is called a "home page"—your opening screen into the WWW. From any reasonably butch home page there will be a number of connections to other people's home pages. By simply clicking on the things that look interesting, the Mosaic user is transported around the WWW to points of interest. Another important function is that it handles all the nasty bits of Internet connectivity in the background. For instance, FTP.

The Internet File Transfer Protocol is one of the niftier features of the Internet. This is the function that allows you to actually pull down one of the quadzillion files that reside on the net and use it at home. However, those who have used, or tried to use, FTP

must admit that it isn't overly friendly in its workings. FTP is nearly as finicky as a *Star Trek* transporter, and nowhere near as easy to figure out. With Mosaic, the hassles of FTP are a thing of the past. When you want to download an available file, you click on it. The nasty bits happen behind the scenes, where they should. You see a message telling you about the progress of the download and informing you when it is completed.

Of course, there is the visual element to be considered also. Using what are called inline images, Mosaic transmits photographic quality visuals along with text. So instead of just looking at a boring text screen, you get color photos or drawings to go with it. Often, parts of the images are mousable, giving a great deal of flexibility in the fun you can have playing with information. As an added attraction, Mosaic also pipes WWW-fed information to other applications on your system seamlessly. For instance, CU-CME, the video transmission software, will run under Mosaic, allowing a home page to also show motion video.

Quite frankly, Mosaic simply destroys the best of the commercial information service interfaces. The newest multimedia interface from AOL is an excellent offering, but Mosaic beats it without a twitch.

Mosaic, for a number of reasons, has exploded out of all proportion as compared to other net-based information tools, such as gopher. We here at **EG** absolutely despise the over-used term Killer App, but have to agree with the insider pundits: Mosaic might very well be the breakaway product to make the net a daily use item for anyone with a computer and a good modem.

The commercial sector sure seems to hope so. A great deal of the recent spate of net frenzy is being driven by commercial interests, who are jumping onto the Internet as fast as they can get their domain names registered. Mosaic looks like the perfect interface for them to try to sell their wares to an on-line audience. This, despite many recent studies indicating that people just don't really buy all that much on-line. Additionally, a great number of users resent seeing corporations muddy the information stream with commerce.

Mosaic, for all of its wonder, isn't perfect. For one thing, while it is almost seamless in its ease of use once it is set up, getting the software installed requires an in-depth knowledge of communications technology. It's not something common users will have a bat's chance of setting up on their own.

Secondly, Mosaic is slow. The reason is

simple: Images are slow to download.

Anyone who has downloaded pictures from an information service knows that those puppies take a long time to move. Since most home pages include graphics, the wait between graphically laden screens can be a minute or more. No one in their right mind would even consider hooking Mosaic over a modem running less than 14.4 K.

However, both of these problems have solutions. First, most commercial Internet providers know quite well how to install Mosaic, and tech support will walk a user through the process. If, for some reason, your provider won't help you set up a browser on your system, you should seriously consider switching providers. There are plenty of Internet connection companies out there who would love to have your business.

The image problem can be worked around by simply turning off the inline images option. You only get text this way, but it improves the speed of the system to downright quick. If you are on a page that you think has images you **MUST** see, simply turn the images back on and reload the screen. All easy, mouse-click operations.

Another important thing to know about WWW is that Mosaic is only the first, not the only, browser out there. Spyglass and Netcruiser are two big names out of the dozen or so browsers on the market right now. Most, to be frank, improve on Mosaic's basic functionality. However, Mosaic is free, a distinction very few other browsers share.

The overall impact of Mosaic on the information highway is unknown, but it is already causing some perceptible changes. Probably the biggest is unlocking the creativity of individual users. Once familiar with the WWW, it is not that difficult to design and operate a home page. It is so simple, in fact, that thousands have designed home pages that not only inform the casual browser, but also entertain, amuse and, occasionally, provoke deep thought.

This is the power of the press, delivered into the hands of the people. With a few simple commands, a person can create a space on the Web particularly their own, and invite others to look at their own little multimedia display of interests and amusements.

While still in its infancy, Mosaic and WWW can already give users of the net a small glimpse of the InfoBahn, without waiting 10 years for it. Anyone with the modem for it should try to at least sample WWW. If this isn't the face of the future, it is at least its shadow.

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Microsoft to Acquire Vatican?

A bogus AP wire story circulated on the Internet reported that Bill Gates (Microsoft's CEO) and Pope John Paul II (Catholic Church's CEO) had arranged for Microsoft to buy out the Catholic religion.

Humorous fictional news stories are nothing new in the Net world, but this particular account was so well written that, apparently, a number of people took the release seriously (...born every minute). The news story got so far out of hand that Microsoft PR flacks actually publicly denied that the company has any cybertheocratic intentions.

Whoever generated the story gets a 21 mouse salute from the EG Network Online Team for making Microsoft produce the most amusing denial in history.

Biggest Boy on the Block

In a move sure to engender fear and loathing from small Internet provider companies, MCI has announced that they plan to go into the Internet provider business.

By the time this issue goes to press, InternetMCI should be available nationally, using software based on the popular Netscape WWW browser package. While only having local access numbers available in 28 cities initially, InternetMCI also plans to have 1-800 toll-free access numbers.

The economies of scale possible by a company as large as MCI are sure to make it the biggest provider of Internet access almost from inception. Further, the telecom giant has a huge advantage over smaller provider corporations in the form of the existing MCI communications network. While other providers have to buy telecommunications bandwidth outside of their local area, MCI's existing long distance capacity gives them the capability of providing local, high speed access numbers to virtually everyone in the United States.

The InternetMCI software will also include the practically unbreakable RSA public key encryption routines in the software. One of the problems with commerce on the Internet is the transferal of credit card numbers over the notoriously insecure Net. RSA encryption should provide a safe way of handling credit transactions over the Internet. IBM and a number of other companies are also working with this technology, which is seen as the key to commercializing the Internet.

Sega Channel Goes National

After successful trials, the Sega Channel has gone national, according to reports in Multimedia Wire.

The channel, which has been in trials during the last year, allows users to play a number of games by connecting their Sega system to their cable. The hardware required is

Using encryption technology and advanced real time networking from parent company Interactive Network Inc., RTGS hopes to bring interactive gambling to the living room.

Currently, seven states allow off-track betting from the home, and gambling is legal in many international markets.



provided by the cable service at sign up. With the Sega connected, any game on the channel can be played by the user, for unlimited time, all for the cost of a premium cable channel.

The smart money says that Blockbuster and other rental outlets for carts are tearing their hair out over this new delivery medium, which directly competes with their rentals, but allows unlimited play for the cost of just a few cart rentals a month.

The biggest question is how many and what quality of games are going to be provided? Initial plans call for 40+ games to be available in any given month, and Sega has said that they intend to do original games available only through the channel. However, some industry insiders speculate that Sega might avoid putting their A-list games on the channel until after they have had plenty of time to sell and rent in traditional outlets.

Company Pursues Interactive Home Gambling

RealTime Gaming Systems of Las Vegas, NV, is pursuing technology that will allow real-time gambling from the home.

According to the Newsbytes service, other investors in the parent company include NBC, TCI, Motorola and Sprint.

The Ballad of John and Bill

According to Inside Media, cable giant Tele-Communications Inc has taken an equity stake of roughly 20% in Microsoft's new online service.

John Malone and Bill Gates, two of the most loved men in all of the technology world, have already aligned their companies in joint interactive television trials, making this newest announcement no big surprise.

However, the link of the huge cable provider and Microsoft's network could very well mean that the service is poised and ready to become one of the first interactive online offerings piped in through cable almost from its inception. Since TCI is already currently using Microsoft's Tiger OS in its set-top boxes, savvy insiders predict that the hooks for Microsoft to offer their Network through cable might already be well in place.

.....
by John P. Withers



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With Advanced Signal Processor SRP, \$399.95



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OVER THE TOP

In *Uniracers*, Nintendo reinvents the wheel

With its unique approach to racing, **Uniracers** is destined to become a classic. The only question that remains is whether it will become a popular or an underground, cult classic. A manic, side-scrolling unicycle racing contest with a split-screen option and extra points for executing spectacular tricks, **Uniracers** offers a visceral kick that most players will develop a solid rapport with. If it isn't buried in the hype for **Donkey Kong Country**, **Uniracers** should cultivate quite a following.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Nintendo
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: Action
MEGABITS: 24
PLAYERS: 1-2
LEVELS: 135+

Many, many years ago, according to legend, the great and powerful Unigod looked out upon the Universe and determined that he was bored. After

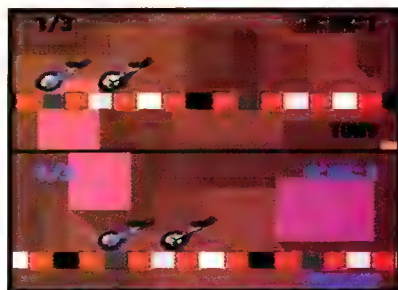
an infinite time locked away in the celestial equivalent of a closet gulping down a never-ending flow of Turbo-Strength Coffee, he came up with the idea of a race of Unicycles that would compete in a series of ultimate games. Not only would this alleviate his boredom, but it could also impress a certain young goddess who thought he lacked creative imagination.

None of the Unicycles around today know whether or not the Unigod actually won his goddess and lived happily ever after. Of course, none of them actually care, since Unicycles live for only one thing: *racing!*

In the One-Player Mode, gamers first select a Unicycle, then start with one of four tours (Crawler, Shuffler, Walker and Hopper). Each tour presents five different tracks. Once gamers score four bronze medals, one for each tour, two new levels (Jumper and Bounder) open up.

When faced with the six levels, gamers must replay the first four tours, plus five and six, in order to earn six

silver medals and open up the seventh and eighth tours (Runner and Sprinter). If players achieve eight gold medals, then the fabled ninth tour (Hunter) becomes available and with it the rumored appearance of the great Anti-Uni, the ultimate racer.



Since **Uniracers** is the most fun when there's competition, what's a solo player to do? Race one of the Ghost cycles, of course. The Ghosts never talk, nor hang out after the race to see the results. One legend claims that Ghosts are the free spirits of cycles that lost important races and were condemned to race forever to prove themselves.

Do not, however, underestimate the Ghost Racers. They will pull out all the stops to prevent the player from successfully winning.



The stunts are, in actuality, one of the most important parts of **Uniracers**. Not only do tricks increase the overall point totals, but when the Unicycle lands correctly, it receives a much-needed burst of speed. The more complex the stunt, the greater the burst of speed. The types of stunts include rolls (Unicycle goes saddle-over-wheel in a face-forward direction); flips (saddle-over-wheel in a backward direction); twist (chassis rotates left or right) and zee-flip (Unicycle moves half-way around).

There are Mega Stunts, but they are not straightforward, easy-to-explain stunts. They are instead combos of highly specific button pushes executed at just the right instant. A piece of advice: Consider Mega Stunts to be almost Zen-like in nature.

There are three types of tracks: race, stunt and circuit. The initial tracks are simple: straight for drag racing, or with simple hills and dips to experiment with stunts. However, as the player's abilities

progress, the tracks are enhanced with ramps, twisting pathways, obstacles (including a gooey substance on the track), loops and short cuts. The stunt track allows gamers to score points for each trick. If the racer earns the required number of points, the track is won.

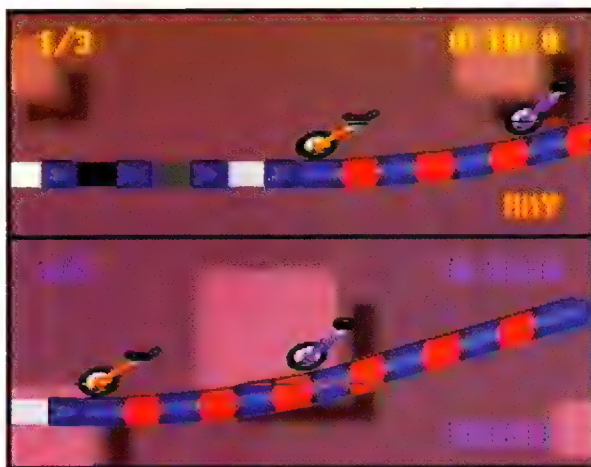
The two-player game works the same as the single-player, except that the screen is split horizontally. The Versus Mode has the winner of the first race facing all comers until someone else wins. In the League Mode, up to 48 players end up competing against each other. (There are six Leagues possible, with a max of eight players per team.)

Not that **Uniracers** is perfect. It does have a few wipeouts of its own to report. First, it's really easy to become disoriented, especially in Two-Player Mode, which can cause a stunt to go awry. Second, if gamers happen to qualify on a track or two and then go back to the Menu choices, all tracks must be requalified.

The music and sound effects keep the game moving along at the proper pace. The graphics are beautiful in their SGI-rendered simplicity. While there aren't the great gobs of eye candy that gamers have come to expect, the blandness of the backgrounds helps to focus attention on the Uniracer.

The color choices on the tracks are vibrant reds, yellows, blues and greens, each with their own code (learn it well, grasshopper) and significance. The cycles themselves are beautifully rendered and maintain their integrity through even the trickiest stunts.

The controls are easy to learn, and the basic stunts come very easily. Continued practice allows players to perform



dazzling stunts, including tabletops, twisting zee-flips and the stunning quad megas. All moves, as they are mastered, feel very natural.

While it might not have the impact of that famous big ape that shall remain nameless, **Uniracers** shows all the signs of becoming a classic: excellent game control, solid music and graphics, incredible numbers of ways to extend the game play and an all-around fun and challenging game. This is the type of game players will be talking about years from now. ■ (Laurie Yates)

SHOULD-BE-WINNERS

Determining whether a game is a top seller or a bargain bin castoff is never an easy call. Here are some games that could've made it to the top but somehow sidestepped popular immortality.

In the case of **Uniracers**, its release was outweighed by that of **DKC**, and while Nintendo has given **Uniracers** full ad support, the Big N's focus has been on the Big Monkey.

Zombies Ate My Neighbors (Konami) has good game play, graphics and sound, but with masked, chainsaw wielding, alien-

controlled Earthlings running around the screen, it did receive some fall-out from the Congressional Hearings on Video Game Violence. LucasArts, which developed the game, eventually wound up selling it to Konami for a reported \$1million U.S.

Military Madness (NEC/TurboGraphx16) Everyone remembers it, everyone who played it loved it and several games borrowed heavily from it, but **MM** had the misfortune of being on a system with a small percentage user base.

ToeJam & Earl (EA/Sega)

Genesis gamers enjoyed the exploits of these two alien pals so much, they emerged not only in a sequel, but also in a module for the **Menacer**. Unfortunately, the game was so good that expectations moved into the stratosphere, prompting Sega to expect another **Sonic**. Even more unfortunately, **T&E** were merely very successful; and when the suits expect mega-success, anything else looks disappointing in contrast.

Other examples include **Qix** (Taito), a coin-op classic that never caught on.

POLITICALLY INCORRECT THIS!

Forget the movie—*Demolition Man* rocks on the 3DO!

Okay, so maybe Joel Silver's testosterone-driven sci-fi parody of life in a world obsessed with political correctness wasn't much. The jokes fell flat, the satire was limp and even the high-powered pyrotechnics didn't really grab audiences' imaginations.

Ah, but this 3DO game by Virgin is a whole other kettle of cryogenically-frozen fish; a collection of spectacular target-shooting, driving, street fighting and first-person POV tunnel contests fitted loosely around the film plot and fastened with cut scenes from the movie.

The program kicks off with some impressive FMV and opens in game terms with an interactive version of the film sequence in which John Spartan



bungee jumps from a helicopter in order to capture Simon Phoenix, who is holding a battery of captives at his weapon-stocked fortress hideout. This mission contains multiple levels, most of them target shooters along the lines of the ALG coin-op gunners and the **Lethal Enforcers** series. Naturally, a light gun peripheral is available, but **Demolition Man** plays just as well with the control pad. (There's even an innovative feature in which the player can zap the target cursor across the screen at high speed by using the top-mounted flippers.)

Periodically, the player-character encounters villain Simon Phoenix for some up-close-and-personal *mano-a-mano* combat. It's no **Samurai Shodown** in complexity, but there are seven attacking moves, two blocks, a hop and a crouch.

As players move through the analog movie plot line, they also experience driving sequences, probably inspired by the scene in which Spartan clings to the roof of a car as it races through a futuristic city, and first-person POV tunnel minigames probably inspired by **Doom**.

Obviously, the first mission must end in ultimate failure (Phoenix must kill the hostages so that Spartan can be arrested and placed in suspended animation), but when the second scenario kicks in, the player-character—as well as the entire story line—has kicked into the future,

where Spartan must pursue his old nemesis through a bloodless future.

They encounter one another in a museum where the new society stores some of the past's most lethal weapons for viewing purposes. Phoenix, of course, opts for a more hands-on type of experience. The battle rages through the museum into the tunnels beneath the city where the society's politically incorrect denizens dwell. During these sequences, hitting the C button invokes a topdown POV motion detector which can pinpoint Phoenix's location.

Eventually, Simon steals some wheels and Spartan similarly "borrows" a vehicle for some hot pursuit, the idea being to force Simon's auto off the road and engage in some hand-to-hand fisticuffs. It all winds up at the cryoprison, where the player must take out Phoenix before he liberates all the imprisoned felons and forges an unstoppable army.

The various game formats all run very sharp, pumped up with plenty of music and sound effects adrenaline. Film producer Silver also provided Virgin with the actual blueprints for all



the film's sets. This allowed the programmers to reconstruct these multi-million dollar soundstages inside state-of-the-art graphic workstations, duplicating the look and feel of the movie.

Demolition Man is a spectacular array of cutting-edge games wrapped up in a hot-looking cinematic package, with special scenes shot just for the game. Too bad it took so long to get **DM** released, but forget the mess of a movie that inspired it and pump *this* edition into your 3DO now. ■ (Bill Kunkel)

LEVEL CODES

Although there are only five macro missions listed for **Demolition Man**, within each mission are numerous levels that break down into the four basic types of game: shooting gallery, hand-to-hand combat, tunnels (**Doom**-style POV) and car chase.

Not up to the twitch heroics demanded even on the easy level? No sweat, we've sussed out a few useful access codes to see some of the neat game play:

LHYNHQB#B
WQ56H2GYS
QQXNHGL25
KR#DHZPP3
GH1MW2KRG
CT7LH2FRD

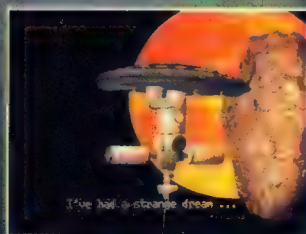
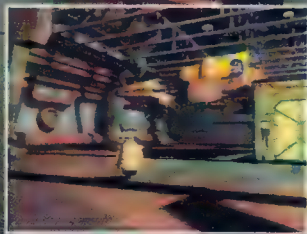
TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Virgin
SYSTEM: 3DO
THEME: Multi-Game
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 5 Missions

ALIEN VIRUS

They're Unseen. Unheard. Unknown And Unfed.

As you get down on the loading pad in the station hangar you are a little puzzled. You remember that on Station Zeus there must be at least a hundred crew members, and not one is here. And while the mystery begins to unfold, the screams and the discarded remains of some poor souls, may not be very easy to digest. In the meantime, an unimaginable horror stalks the few hostages that you have left aboard Station Zeus.



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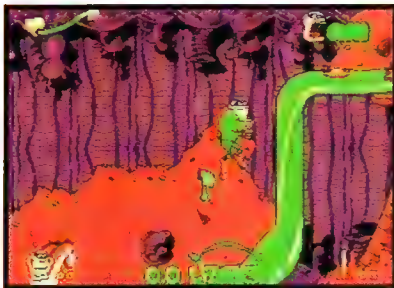
PC CD-ROM

NET WORTH: GROSS OUT

Boogerman—a game ripe for the picking

Video game superheroes come in all shapes, sizes and costumes, but Interplay's latest side-scrolling, platform-based champion may set a new standard in silly-con superheroics.

Boogerman: A Pick & Flick Adventure, pulls no punches, from its vulgar title to its infantile graphics; this game has no shame. It



wants to jack into the sudden vogue for moronic heroes and an obsession with gross bodily functions. Certainly, no consumer could mistake it for **Maximum Carnage**.

It just might make it.

Boogerman opens on a dark and stormy night, with strange things happening at the weird new science lab built in the hills above Takey Dump, the world's largest land fill.

Set in the not-so-distant future, the planet is rebounding from an ecological slump that had all but buried the Earth in its own refuse. Then Professor Stinkbaum, an up-and-coming mad scientist, invented a device to transport the world's refuse into another dimension. Popularly referred to as "Dimension X-crement," it received all of the waste shipments without so much as a burp.

But our hero, eccentric millionaire

Snotty Ragsdale, has a bad feeling about this seemingly ideal solution. He winds up taking a job at the lab as a janitor to confirm his suspicions, and clean up any problems. Even though he is seriously out of practice as a superhero, he plans to reclaim his cape and assume the exhausting role of Boogerman, if that's what it takes to give the world a clean sweep. Ah, but uneasy lies the butt that sits upon the superhero throne.

The look of the game is somewhat

GAME TASTE?

Boogerman is hardly the first electronic game with a less-than-delicate theme. From the earliest days of the hobby, bad taste has held an irresistible appeal for game designers. One classic, that appeared in several different handheld formats was **Fireman**, **Fireman**, in which players guided a pair of firemen holding a safety net, attempting to catch children falling from the windows of a burning orphanage. If they caught 'em, the kiddies bounced safely into an ambulance; if they missed, however, the children sprouted angel wings and fluttered off to heaven. Then there was **Shark Attack**, with those gouts of blood...

disappointing; funny, but not especially well rendered. A game with a similar theme, **Global Gladiators** (Virgin/Genesis) also made extensive use of pustules, puss and gaggy, green glop as a platform background. But while **Gladiators** employed top-of-the-line graphics, great sound effects and a breakthrough musical score,

Boogerman looks like a modestly colored Game Boy product. The relentless use of dysentery green as the prevailing color scheme gives the game a queasy quality that no words can adequately describe. Even adolescents who think they should find this hysterical are likely to find the presentation tedious.

Boogerman's 20-plus levels are divided among six worlds. The Flatulent Swamps, filled with the foul substances that Earth sent to X-crement, must be carefully navigated. The Pits send the caped one along intestinal tracks [sic] that wind through hair, moles and other tastefully-chosen body components.

Boogerville, a once clean, happy community, has been taken over by the Booger Meister's nose goblins. Under their community revitalization plan, even the buildings may hock loogies at citizens. Mucous Mountains, the oozing, goeey home of true buttheads, must be mounted, while its denizens try to stop our hero from saving their world.

Nasal Caverns, the last of the big worlds, takes Boogerman into Snot Lakes and other disgusting locales. The final showdown, against the Booger Meister, occurs in the Pus Palace, a true monument to all that is non-appetizing.

Boogerman incorporates some of the best aspects of platform gaming (a plethora of moves and collectibles, interesting objects and a variety of enemies). Then it adds a compulsive attitude toward farts, burps, spit gobs and other less-than-idyllic biological imagery. The combination creates a video game that survives largely on the novelty of its sometimes cynical, over-the-top irreverence. **✚** (Laurie Yates & Bill Kunkel)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Interplay
SYSTEM: Genesis
THEME: Action
MEGABITS: 24
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 20+

Drug Wars™

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LIVE MOTION ACTION
CD Shooting Game

The Arcade Smash Hit by



THE XENOZOIC HIGHWAY

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs comes to the Sega CD

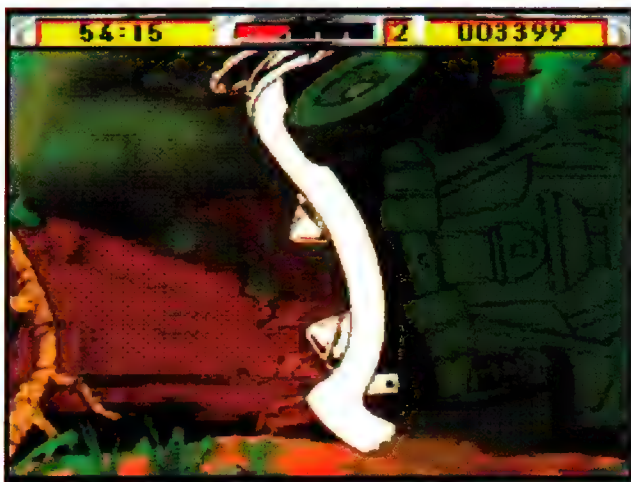
The science fantasy future created by graphic novelist Mark Schultz is a far cry from the ones populated by sword-swinging barbarians, seven-segment artifacts and kidnapped princesses. It's an appealing, if unlikely, combination of modern technology and ecology that spans a billion years of evolution.

After a series of disasters, known as the Great Cataclysm, disrupted the entire planet in 2020, the few remaining humans exiled themselves to vast, man-made underground homes. Mechanics

Xenozoic Age. It cannot exist, but it does. Every species since the dawn of life on this planet walks, slithers, swims or flies again!

Governor Scharnhorst doesn't care much about the *Machinatio Vitae*. Using the machines of the ancients, this ruth-

less politician brooks no opposition to her tyrannical plans. When Jack Tenrec and Hannah Dundee discover they've had the same dream about an impending Second Cataclysm, they jump in their Cadillac and look for the Grith, a wise



became indispensable, because only they could repair the remnants of technology. Humanity learns to revere the *Machinatio Vitae*, the machinery of life. This philosophy holds that the ecosystem is like a giant machine, and that man must keep all of its components in balance to preserve the whole.

Hundreds of years later, the survivors' descendants emerge from their metallic burrows to confront the

member of a reclusive sentient race. As the digital countdown clock in the upper left corner ticks away the last 60 minutes before the Second Cataclysm, Jack and Hannah must drive and shoot their way through numerous hazards, including dumb-but-deadly dinosaurs and evil poachers whose illegal activities threaten the *Machinatio Vitae* only slightly less than Governor Scharnhorst.

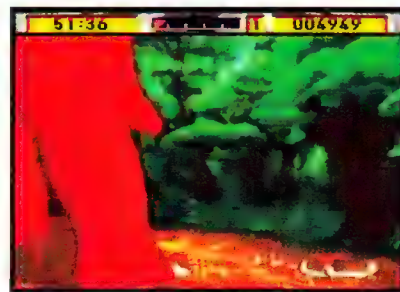
Like too many other discs for the

Sega CD, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* has a terrific build-up that leads to fairly limited game play. Once the brilliantly staged introduction, reprised in comic book form in the documentation, ends, it's mostly a matter of driving down a road shooting obstacles and poachers while avoiding harm to inoffensive living creatures.

It's tough to fault the animation or the lush illustrations of the bizarre fauna and flora of the Xenozoic Age.

The spoken passages are dramatized well. The voice-actors, though not the big names found in some current titles, do a very professional job. The game music, by now-defunct Neuromantic Productions (Jim Hedges and Mark Miller) is appropriately lively.

Developer Rocket Science still hasn't learned how to make an entertaining and involving video game. This race-and-shoot title's play-action can only be described as pedestrian. The scenery is visually exciting, as are the cut scenes,



but *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* won't keep most players glued to the screen. Rocket Science takes great pains to evoke Schultz's graphics, but doesn't have as good a handle on the content. It's hard to believe that Mark Schultz's fascinating and varied world boils down to this.

The resemblance to Rocket Science's earlier *Lodestar* is a little strong, too. The Cadillac cruises down a twisty road with forking paths, not a track, but the core play-action is similar.

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs has form, but it lacks substance. Despite top-quality audiovisuals, it doesn't grab and hold the player's attention. **L+** (Arnie Katz)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Sega
SYSTEM: Sega CD
THEME: Driver-Shooter
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1-2
LEVELS: 8

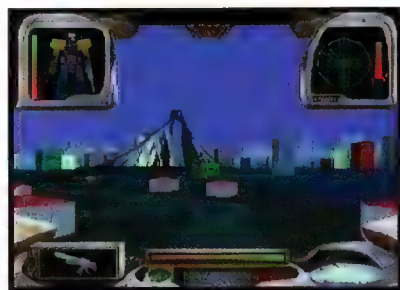
THE IRON AGE IS UPON US

Iron Soldier for the Jaguar kicks robotic butt

There's something about piloting a 40-foot-tall robot warrior that appeals to the testosterone laden psyche. Witness **Mechwarrior**, **Battletech**, **Metal Head** and all the other games that share the same theme:

The player, as the pilot of a huge robot, blows the heck out of anything that crosses its path.

Iron Soldier for the Atari Jaguar proudly joins the ranks of walking gun platforms. In the far future, three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered with steel cities and industrial wastelands. The Iron Fist Corporation (IFC) has overthrown all national governments and rules the world with an, um, iron fist. As a member of the resistance dedicated to ending the tyranny, the player must command a prototype weapon captured from the IFC: A 42-foot-tall, piloted robot known as the Iron Soldier (IS).



The Iron Soldier is a real battle wagon. It comes equipped with an assault rifle and the standard manipulator (a hand). The assault rifle fires 75mm slugs in three-round bursts. The manipulator is no slouch either. It is easy (and immensely satisfying) to pound a building into rubble with one's bare manipulator.



As the game progresses, the player gains access to truly buff firepower like rocket launchers, cruise missiles and electromagnetic railguns that fire 120mm, armor-piercing rounds. Other weapons include a gatling gun, oil drum-sized grenades and manipulator-held chaincutters that are devastating against buildings.

The large menagerie of enemies includes light and heavy tanks, helicopters, bombers and gun emplacements, plus the occasional opposing Iron Soldier. In the case of light tanks and gun emplacements, the player only needs to step on them to destroy them.

Iron Soldier is not exactly the most intellectual game in the world. There are no petty distractions like overheating or weight consideration found in those other mech games, but there are a lot of opportunities to blow things up and spread mayhem and destruction, all in the name of saving the Earth. The player can even level a large portion of a city he is supposed to be liberating and still win, as long as the goals of the mission are met.

The battle to overthrow IFC takes the form of 16 different missions, divided into blocks of four. Before each mission, the player must outfit the IS with the weapons he wants to use. The four missions can be played in any order but sometimes, it helps to play the missions

in order as there are several valuable weapons to be found that make the later missions easier.

The perspective is first person, looking out from the cockpit of the IS. A radar screen in the right corner displays the position of enemies, while a weapon indicator on the upper left shows how many shots remain in the currently selected weapon. A bar across the bottom of the screen indicates the amount of energy the IS has left. It is depleted by taking damage.

There are two sets of controls. The default control makes the mech walk in whatever direction the player is looking. The advanced controls allow the player to look up, down, right or left without changing walking direction.

Graphically, **Iron Soldier** is very appealing. The buildings, enemies and robots are rendered in polygons, while the distant mountains in the background look hand painted. The environment is very interactive, which is to say that just about everything can be blown up or trampled upon, and the explosions are pure eye candy, featuring realistic-looking flames and cool, flying debris. The cruise missile sequence, where the player flies the missile to its target, is especially good. There is some jumping when the Jaguar abruptly draws in graphical details as the IS approaches objects, but this is relatively minor, given the game's other graphical strengths. The sound is very good as well. The *thwunk* of the grenade launcher is a beautiful thing to hear, and the soundtrack is pretty good, too.

Iron Soldier is a lot of fun. There are three levels of difficulty to keep players' interest up, and a save feature allows the player the necessity of saving a game in mid-campaign. Even if it isn't the best game in the so-far limited Jaguar library, **Iron Soldier** is the first game of its kind on the Jaguar, and a strong entry into the field at that. For lots of firepower-oriented action, along with a thrilling ride, take a daily dose of **Iron**. **A-**
(John Wesley Hardin)

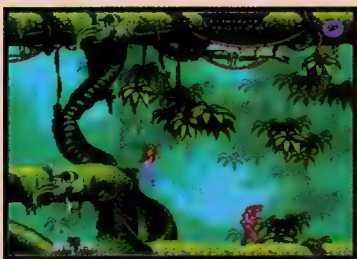
TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Atari
SYSTEM: Jaguar
THEME: Combat
MEGABITS: 16
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 16

THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of a variety of entertainment software reviewers from around the country. Their critical appraisals of the latest software releases are presented here.

	Arnie Katz ELECTRONIC GAMES	Mac Camacho ELECTRONIC GAMES	Bill Kunkel EG	Steven Kent Precedence
Aerobiz Supersonic	B+	A-	B	-
Alien vs. Predator	A-	B	A	A-
Adv. of Batman	B-	C	C+	B
Blackthorn	B+	B	B+	-
Bubsy II	A-	B	B+	-
Demon's Crest	B+	A-	A	B+
Donkey Kong Country	A+	A+	A+	A+
Dynamite Headz	B	B	A	-
Earthworm Jim	B+	A-	B-	A-
Escape, Monster M.	A-	B	C	B
Final Fantasy III	A	A+	A+	A-
The Horde (300)	B-	C+	B	C+
Illusion of Gaia	B+	B	A	B+
Indiana Jones G.A.	B	B-	B	-
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	B+
Jurassic Park (300)	B	B	B	B
Larussa Baseball '95	C+	C	C+	-
Lion King, The	A-	A	A	B+
Lodestar	B-	B-	B	B-
Mickey Mania	A	A	A	A
NBA Jam	A	A	A+	A
Off World Interceptor	C+	C	C+	A
Pac Attack	B	A-	A	C
Pitfall: Mayan Adv.	B+	A	B+	-
Radical Rex	C	C	C	C-
Rise of the Robots	B-	C+	B+	C-
Shining Force II	B	B	B-	-
Shockwave	B+	B+	A	B+
Slayer	B-	C	B	C+
Starfleet Academy	A	A	A	A-
Syndicate	B	B-	B+	B
T&Z: Escape from Mars	B+	B+	B+	B
Tempest 2000	A	A+	A	D+
Vay	C+	B	B	-
Virtual Bart	B	B+	C+	-
Voyeur (CS-I)	B	B+	B	-
Way of the Warrior	A+	A-	A	D
WWF Raw	B+	C+	A-	B-
X-Men (SNES)	C+	C-	B	B



Small characters, beautiful backgrounds add to the appeal of Flashback.

Masked Rider (Sega/Sega CD)

Conventional wisdom holds that hitchhiking is dangerous. This wisdom proves particularly apt when contemplating taking a spin with the **Masked Rider**, the latest failure for the Sega CD. With approximately 15 minutes of actual interactive game action, the



entirety of the game play requires endlessly tapping the direction pad in response to on-screen arrow prompts. There's some blocking, kicking and punching, but again only when the on-screen instructions dictate the action. The FMV sequences are visually tired and fuzzy, which is sloppy and haphazard for a piece of software that is more movie than game. **D-** (Laurie Yates)

Jurassic Park 2: The Chaos Continues

(Ocean/SNES) This sequel picks up where the movie left off. The player is a mercenary in the employ of a megacorporation that wants to go back in and



make Jurassic Park work. Well, it probably wouldn't move much at the box office, but it works nicely as a setup for the game.

The action is divided into six missions: Raptor Attack, T-Rex Carnage, Blockade, High Ptera, Seek and Destroy and Protect the Gallimimus. Equipped with an impressive arsenal of lethal and non-lethal weapons, the player battles human and saurian opponents. The dinosaurs are attractively rendered, the sound effects are great and the game play is side scrolling. If you can't live without another *Jurassic Park* game,

this may be the theme park for you. **B** (John W. Hardin)

3 Ninjas Kick Back & Hook (Sony Imagesoft/Sega CD) Sony's dual-packaging of Sega CD titles does offer the consumer one dubious bonus: two mediocre titles for the price of one.

3 Ninjas allows one or two gamers to assume the role of one of the Disney film's title characters in a mostly side-scrolling platform adventure, buttressed by first-person perspectives on the skateboarding and hang-gliding levels.

Single-player **Hook**, meanwhile, which is several years old, also employs a side-scrolling perspective in its Neverland jaunt, but incorporates some great digitized cut-scenes from the movie. Both 12-level adventures demand some fast finger action.

3 Ninjas: C; Hook: B- (Laurie Yates)

Johnny Cocktails (Great Bear/3D0) Now here's a cute idea; players get to select jokes and create a stand-up routine for a claymation-style virtual comedian who then delivers the entire set in a nicely-rendered digital comedy club.

Just one flaw in this otherwise high-concept cutie: The jokes stink. I mean they are so awful Milton Berle wouldn't steal them. If they allowed users to input their own humor, this might actually work. Until then, it's flopsweat time. **D-** (Bill Kunkel)

Chaos Control (Philips/CD-i) All right! CD-i fans rejoice; not only do you have **Burn: Cycle** to wallow in, but (assuming you own the invaluable MPEG upgrade) **Chaos Control** is now on the horizon, one of the most visually awesome shooters ever seen on any game system. Unforgettable sequences include a high-tech dogfight over the Statue of Liberty that doesn't even hint at polygons. The programming by Infogrames is flawless, and while there should certainly be more levels (the five that are available on our version are great, but too brief), this game absolutely rocks the CD-i! **A-** (Bill Kunkel)

Michael Jordan Chaos (Electronic Arts/SNES) First things first: This is no **Shaq Fu**, but an altogether charming platform arcade quest in which Michael Jordan (armed with a variety of specially powered roundballs—no, he doesn't stop to play baseball at any point)

attempts to rescue the kidnapped members of a team with whom he's scheduled to play a charity game.

There are lots of commercial tie-ins with traditional Jordan sponsors, including Wheaties and Gatorade icons (to restore hit points), but by the time Michael catches up with archvillain Dr. Max Cranium and drives him into the boards, players of all ages are likely to be caught up in this well-produced platformer. **B+** (Bill Kunkel)

Flashback (U.S. Gold/Genesis) Is there anyone, anywhere who has somehow avoided playing **Flashback** by now? Well, while those dwindling few unfortunates await the arrival of the CD-i and Jaguar editions (likely to be followed by a version for touch-tone phones), here it stands, runs, leaps and climbs all over the Genesis. **Flashback** is a superb, if slightly dated platform contest using delicate, **Prince of Persia**-style animation and tiny characters whose size makes the lush landscape in the background look absolutely overwhelming to the eye.

If you don't own a version yet, catch up with the rest of the world. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

Doom (Atari/Jaguar) There was quite a bit of early word that this edition would blow away Sega's 32X **Doom**, but the two versions are almost identical, except for the fact that the Jaguar version offers full-screen graphics as opposed to the Sega's windowboxed look. Downside: Of the 30 levels, some repeat. Speed's about the same. Biggest advantage: The Jag's **Doom** is two-player network compatible. Advantage: Jaguar. **B** (Bill Kunkel)

ESPN Speed World (Sony-ImageSoft/Genesis) The ESPN label is, potentially, the strongest sports imprint in the business, but if it continues to associate its name with such thoroughly wretched software as this, its value is going to disappear like an ice patch on a Florida race track in mid-August.

What's wrong with this game? It looks like something from 1983, the tracks are unrealistic and the game flows in a visually implausible manner. You're fine on the straight-aways, but once it's time to move that wheel, there is no sense that you're even making a turn. There's a split-screen, two-player

version, and lots of user customization features, but no fun here. **F** (Bill Kunkel)

ATP Tour Championship Tennis (Sega/Genesis) Serve's up for one to four players in this 16-Bit action simulation of the ATP tour. The game contains 32 famous current players, plus eight legendary greats, who compete in exhibition matches, tournaments and tours. The gamer can also construct a new tennis star, rated for speed, control and power and compete against the famous names.

Despite some excellent trimmings, like digitized photos and spoken commentary, **ATP Tour Championship Tennis** rates only fair in appearance. The scaling on the ball, with its extreme variations in size, is a little much. Good, solid action, though, especially for those players who want to both position the on-screen player and time the actual shot. **B** (Arnie Katz)

Lemmings II: The Tribes (Psygnosis/SNES) The world's most popular suicidal rodents are back in this cart for the SNES. Now, instead of eight different types of lemming, there are 50, with amusing powers like surfing, hang gliding, laser blasting and Super Lemming. Instead of one brand of lemming, there are now four different tribes: The Space Tribe, the Medieval Tribe, the Egyptian Tribe and the Polar Tribe.

Each individual tribe has its own locations. The Polar Tribe has a nice layer of snow and Icicles, while the Egyptians have pyramids and sphinxes and the Medieval Tribe's environs are



made up of castles and so on. The puzzles are even more fiendish than in the first Lemmings if you can believe that, which is good news for rabid puzzle fans, but the tribes just do not hold as much appeal for the fans of the simpler, more elegant original Lemmings game.

B- (John W. Hardin)

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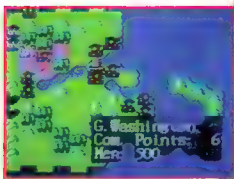
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SUPER NINTENDO



FAMILIAR FACES IN OUTER SPACE

See the stars in *Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger*

The *Wing Commander* series has made one of the most dramatic progressions of any video game or computer game series in recent memory. What started as a very exciting space combat simulation has graduated into a full-force interactive movie (just like the box says) that retains the same fun, challenging game play that attracted players in the first place.

Origin's slogan is "We create worlds." With *Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger*, they not only created the world, but filmed, modeled and fit it into the history and lore that permeates the *Wing Commander* universe. It's no wonder that the next step in the *Wing Commander* saga is to take man and Kiltrathi to the big screen. But first, let's focus on the third installment in the series that redirected the combat simulation market.

Wing Commander III takes place

TECH SPECS	
PUBLISHER:	Origin
DESIGNER:	C. Roberts, F. Savage
SYSTEM:	PC-CD
THEME:	Space Combat sim
HD SPACE:	10 MB
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	N/A

far enough in the future for it to be believable, yet not too far away to distance players from the human situation in the game. Mankind is on its last legs against the cat-like (rather tiger-like) Kiltrathi race who have all but defeated the planet's forces. It is up to the *TCS Victory* and its crew to repel the Kiltrathi and save mankind. In summary, this plot may sound too simplistic and familiar, but the subtleties, drama, action and plot twists in the game drive those mediocre thoughts from the mind.

Wing Commander III continues in format, but not in presentation, the plot that changes with each mission and revolves around the characters. As in past games, players can branch in the plot based on their performance, so a good pilot must be even better if he or she is to travel the most successful route of the game.

The game's interface is mostly the same players have seen in past *Wing Commander* games. They must control a variety of Terran Confederation



spaceships with simple keyboard command hot keys and total joystick control of the action. **Wing Commander III** is not any more difficult or easier to learn than past **Wing Commander** games,



but the addition of training missions in a simulated simulator does prepare novice pilots for the real missions. The controls become second nature after a few missions, so players can largely forget the interface and concentrate on the action.

The missions themselves vary in difficulty and purpose from escort missions to all-out attacks. Those who fail a mission, yet survive the battle, face tougher tests of their skills until they "re-enter" the plot along the successful path a few missions later. A separate guide to the game's ships and a booklet that outlines the story behind the game set the mood for each mission and instill a sense of urgency in the player to concentrate on the tasks at hand.



When players refer to **Wing Commander**, they never rattle off a number of missions that they completed, but instead refer to a point in the plot where they last played. This focus of the drama, rather than the game mechanics, is a testament to the excellent cinematics always present in the series. Even the first **Wing Commander** involved many story screens and film-inspired segments, although they depended on atmospheric music for success. **Wing Commander II** added speech to the missions for a slightly more realistic feel. **Wing Commander III** takes a giant leap forward with the inclusion of

video, live actors and actresses plus a full score more dramatic, touching and exciting than past soundtracks—right in line with the cinematic overhaul of the **Wing Commander** game system.

The acting talent in **Wing Commander III** comes from all corners of filmdom, but fit together well in the end product. The player-character, Col. Christopher Blair, is none other than Mark Hamill of *Star Wars* fame. It's somewhat ironic that Hamill ended up in the **Wing Commander** saga rather than LucasArts' X-Wing or TIE Fighter games, but that just proves how far ahead of the trend series creator Chris Roberts was with the **Commander** games.

Malcolm McDowell makes the perfect Admiral Tolwyn, playing a much better part than the one he played in *Star Trek: Generations*, even if he does look the same. John Rhys-Davies, Indiana Jones' pal in that series' first and third movies, is a perfect fit for Paladin, Blair's pal and confidante. The very familiar Jason Bernard is Capt. Eisen and Ginger Lynn Allen steals the spotlight in any scene in which she appears as Chief Tech Rachel Coriolis, the mechanic and ships' weapons specialist. Another perfectly cast familiar face is Tom Wilson, *Back to the Future* trilogy's Biff, as the obnoxious, reckless pilot Maniac.

The Kilrathi in this game are not portrayed by actors, but instead are animatronic beasts synched with the voices that speak their lines. This experiment could have been disastrous, but actually works quite well. Ultimately, the best bet may still be to use actors in fitted suits and prosthetic makeup.

The voice talent that provide personality for the main Kilrathi characters are: John Rhys-Davies, Tim Curry, Alan Mandell and John Schuck. Schuck plays Hobbes, the Kilrathi who opposes the war and flies for the Federation. He is no stranger to alien roles since he was at one time or another a television automaton and a motion picture Klingon.

Just as **Wing Commander III** is a technological breakthrough in its video aspects, the graphics, sound effects and music also reach a higher plateau. The graphics are particularly impressive because the modeled ships and redesigned cockpits have a smoother look and higher detail than past **Wing Commander** titles. The space combat



scenes look like they were filmed, although it is certain that they are computer generated. It is very easy for players to focus on the screen and get lost in the game's world as they watch the dramatic scenes and action. The moving music and top-notch sound effects complete this illusion of reality, unlike many games in which the absence of music or sound effects or both makes little or no difference.

The technical aspects that make **Wing Commander III** so great also may frustrate many players. Origin learned their lesson with **Strike Commander**. Players have a variety of systems and are not prepared to go out and buy a top-of-the-line system to play the games, but they'll do anything they can to make it work on their computer.

Wing Commander III will run on a variety of computers, but the minimums are pretty strict. It's true that if one can run **Wing Commander III** in its complete form they can run any CD game available. Origin included a very complete troubleshooting guide and suggestions so that everyone with a 486 computer or better and reasonable RAM, CD-ROM speed and video card can determine a way to run **Wing Commander III**.

Origin unleashed **Wing Commander III** on players without too much pre-hype, even though it was one of the most anticipated games for a long time. The design team under Roberts and Savage pulled all kinds of tricks to create the best, most exciting flight simulation/adventure available. The game deserves praise across the board for the efforts of all those involved, from the film crew and talent to artists and musicians. **Wing Commander III** is an important example of what all games will eventually become—true interactive, cinematic experiences. After just a few missions, players everywhere will want that movie version of **Wing Commander** to come out soon. **R+**
(Russ Ceccola)

VIKING LEGENDS COME TO LIFE

Build lands under the eye of Odin in *Hammer of the Gods*

Back in the days of the Vikings, people took their gods mucho seriously. Case in point: In those times, if a warrior got a chance to become Odin's right-hand man, he'd do any required task quicker than dragons can fry eggs.

Such is the setting of New World Computing's new strategy game, **Hammer of the Gods**. In this contest of exploration and war, the player must complete a number of quests assigned by the ancient gods. As they complete these quests, the players move upward through the hierarchy of the gods, until they earn a seat next to Odin himself.



The quests range from something as simple as giving away a daughter in marriage, to conquering an opponent's capital city. Of course, because there are three other players (human or computer) all vying for the attention of the gods, the player must use diplomatic, defensive and offensive means to enlarge and protect his growing empire.



Game play is similar to that of **Civilization**, where the player explores an on-screen map, building cities and conquering countryside. At first, the map is vaguely detailed, lacking useful information. As the player explores, however, the details of the map fill in, with the player discovering rivers, mountains, forests, tundra, cities and

castles. The player expands his empire by building and conquering cities. When the player attacks a city, the screen display changes to a close-up battle scene in which the player can control the fight. All members of the attacking and defending army are shown as animated figures who swing swords, fire arrows, thrust pitchforks, sling rocks and in the case of the fearful dragons, claw, bite and breathe fire. If he likes, the player can control each individual in his party or just set the Auto Mode and let the computer play out the fight.

As the player's fame and honor

spreads, warriors—and even powerful heroes—flock to his capital city and volunteer for service. For a fee, the player can outfit these new warriors and add them to his conquering forces. In all, there are 27 types of warriors, including human slingers, archers, swordsmen, berserkers, wizards and Viking heroes, and also elves, dwarves, trolls, skeletons, drakes, giants, ogres and necromancers.

Not every action in **Hammer of the Gods** leads to war, however. Diplomacy, too, plays a role in how a player is perceived by the land's residents. Whereas battle prowess increases fame, dealing with people fairly and with diplomacy increases honor. In any turn, the player can send messages to other rulers, seeking trade agreements and treaties. Sons can be offered as hostages in order to establish peace and daughters can be given away as brides.

In spite of the fact that **Hammer of the Gods** is delivered on CD-ROM, the game is curiously limited in music and sound effects. Theme music pops in only occasionally, and while the sound effects are apt and well used, they're not much more elaborate than what one would expect on a floppy disk-based game. **Hammer of the Gods** tries to make up for this oversight by including a short animated introduction, with a professional voice-over, as well as spoken-word passages that pronounce the names of the gods shown in the quest screen. In addition, the game features beautifully drawn graphics and convincing animation.

Although not as complex as games like **Civilization** and **Master of Magic**, **Hammer of the Gods** offers a solid strategy contest with enough nuances to keep the player hunched over his computer for hours. The ability to play **Hammer of the Gods** over a modem, network or even by e-mail ensures that Holistic and New World Computing have made a game that will stay interesting for months. **B** (Clayton Walnum)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: New World Computing
DESIGNER: Holistic Design Inc.
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Strategy
HD SPACE: 10 MB (30 KB min)
PLAYERS: 1-4
LEVELS: N/A

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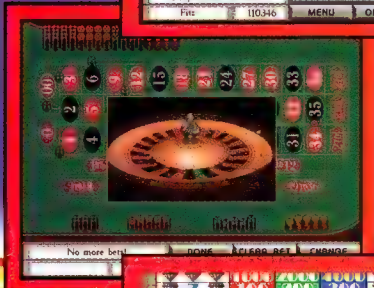
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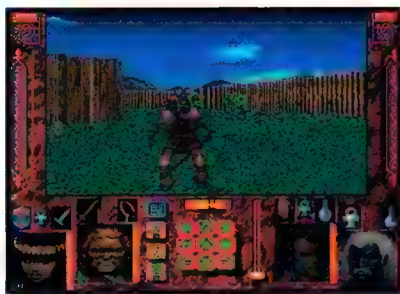
LET'S HAVE A RESCUE PARTY

Beware the denizens of *Menzoberranzan*

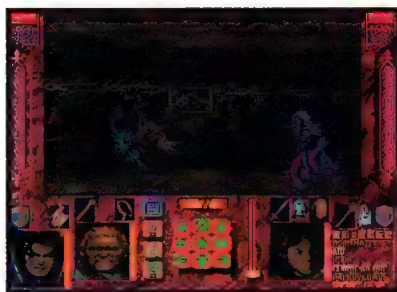
And they say New York is bad. It's got nothing on Menzoberranzan. There is nowhere on the surface world to compare with the city of Menzoberranzan. Maybe that's why it's underground—in the realm known as the Underdark.

Strategic Simulations and its design group, Dreamforge Entertainment, have released another saga in *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Forgotten Realms*, called **Menzoberranzan**. How it's pronounced is anyone's guess, but the game is a doozy. A village is attacked and raided by a band of Drow, underground elves who live in the city of—you guessed it—Menzoberranzan. These are not nice people. They burn buildings and carry off villagers. A pair of intrepid local adventurers—or maybe they were just in town for the wine festival—help put out the fires and fight off a couple of stray Drows, then go off in search of the kidnapped villagers. What happens next depends on who these adventurers are, how well they comport themselves in battle and any number of other factors that are up to the player to decide.

As with other AD&D games, the characters and their abilities are determined by choice of race (Human, Halfling, Elf, Gnome, Dwarf or Half-Elf), class (Cleric, Paladin, Thief, Mage, Ranger or Fighter), orientation (Good, Neutral, Lawful, Chaotic) and such things as Hit Points and Experience Levels. The Player could be, for example, a Human Paladin, with the advantage of great wisdom and the ability to use any weapon, or a gnomish Thief, who can pick the locks of stubborn



doors. Actually, in this game, having a Thief in the party is almost a prerequisite, because there are so many locks to be picked, and so many booby traps to be disarmed, and a Thief knows how to do these things. A Mage or a Cleric is



also a good party member, because of their ability to cast spells, although each of them goes about getting the spells in a different way: The Mage memorizes spells as he finds them, and the Cleric gets his magic straight from the gods. He must pray for his spells.

Although the party starts out with only two adventurers, others, lured no doubt by the promise of wealth and violence, quickly join in. The party's chances of succeeding in its quest improve with the addition of Drizzt, an aristocratic Drow who didn't like what his countrymen were doing and left the city of Menzo to help the surface world. He and his magic black panther from another dimension, Guenhwyvar, are powerful allies. On the other hand, the only enemy greater to the Drow than their surface cousins, the Elves, is their traitorous countryman, so things could get a little dicey with Drizzt in the group. Still, it's worth it. That panther is hell on wheels.

Ranged against this intrepid band is an assortment of creatures so evil, so ugly and so outright cranky that it's a wonder anyone in the group survives. They don't, always, but with the judicial use of a raise-the-dead spell, they can keep on fighting. Aside from the Drow and their spider Queen, Lolth, there are Derro Dwarves, Driders (sort of a

Spider/Drow centaur), Fungi Skeletons, Ochre Jellies (the Blob was a distant cousin) and other creepy, crawly nasties too numerous to list. Some, of course, are more formidable than others—Drizzt's own family is among the worst.

The graphics in **Menzoberranzan** are terrific, with a little tweaker thrown in called *sprite dithering*, which blends the colors of neighboring pixels to keep oncoming creatures from appearing blocky. The sound is good, the music appropriately heroic—and it can be turned off if it gets too annoying.

The game is played from first-person perspective, with an adjustable viewing window. The party members are ranged underneath (or at least their faces are) in front and rear ranks, with the tools needed to move and fight. A second screen shows the characters full-sized, with all their attributes, and is used to access the adventurers' weapons or spells. To move around, the player can use the arrows in the center of the screen and ranged around the sides of the viewing window. Or (and this is a favorite option), with a flick of the spacebar, the player can use the Free Mouse Movement Option and move simply by moving the mouse. This makes moving around very easy, but it takes a little getting used to.

Another great option is the Auto Mapping feature. SSI has removed the necessity of using pen and paper to map the vast and intricate expanse of their invented world. Instead, they have provided the player with an on-screen map, which automatically traces where the player has gone, and offers the option of writing notes, printing the map or saving it to disk. What the auto map does not do, however, is show what the player hasn't seen yet—so while she's looking at her map, a Night Hunter might be swooping down on the party.

There are a great many RPGs on the market, and sometimes it gets a little difficult to tell them apart. But nobody can miss **Menzoberranzan**. Not even

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Strategic Simulations
DESIGNER: DreamForge Ent.
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: RPG
HD SPACE: 25 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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IT'S THOSE PESKY ORCS AGAIN

Head-to-head play takes *WarCraft* out of the ordinary

The Kingdom of Azeroth enjoyed prosperity and peace until the fiendish horde of Orcs arrived. It is only the cunning of mankind's strategists that has prevented the collapse of the human forces. But in *WarCraft*, that's only half the

tale. The Orcs have a different view of things. Having utterly conquered their own world, the Orcs needed a new common enemy less they destroy themselves. The Orcs' magicians, taking advantage of a previously unnoticed interdimensional rift, forged a passage-way to the "alien" human homeland.

WarCraft not only gives players both sides to the backstory, in a clever turn it lets the player choose sides in game play. The game manual is even printed so that there are two manuals: one side for humans, the other for Orcs.

WarCraft is a competent example of the resource management/siege and conquest games which have proven so popular. Gamers familiar with titles like *Castles 2* from Interplay or *Ultimate Domain* from Mindscape will find *WarCraft* uncannily familiar.

The player is assigned the role of captain or lord of a parcel of land. The goal is to develop that land as quickly as possible. Typically, the centerpiece of development is the village. The player must martial the resources available, both in material and personnel. The personnel resources include Peasants, who can be assigned construction and harvesting tasks, and military personnel, including Footmen, Archers and later in the game, Knights.

The three critical resources are timber, gold and food, all of which are



gathered by assigning the appropriate tasks to available Peasants.

The Peasants do the building necessary for survival. Players must first construct a Barracks for defense of the village. Subsequent projects include farms to feed the growing ranks under the player's command, and Lumber Mills, Blacksmiths and Stables. The latter three are needed to develop certain resources, like improved arrowheads, and for the construction of war siege machines like the catapult.

The Peasants can also construct Churches and Towers, which will help the player recruit two special personnel, Clerics and Conjurers. The Clerics can be an effective fighting force using their Holy Lance spell, but they are more valuable as healers to the non-magicked troops. The Conjurers' magic proves more deadly in combat.

From the Orc perspective, the same basic types are laid out again. There is an analog Orc construction or personnel resource for every human type. This sameness between sides is one of the shortcomings of the game. It would have been far more interesting from a strategist's perspective to give these opposing forces different strengths and weaknesses. As delivered, the change in sides offers the player little more than a different set of graphics.

WarCraft diverges from titles like

Castles II and *Ultimate Domain* by setting up game play as a sequence of missions. Once the player has achieved the objective, that scenario ends and an entirely new one is loaded. *WarCraft* even diverges occasionally from the "develop and conquer" scenario when, for example, the player must lead a rescue mission in a cavernous maze to retrieve a wounded Knight. The game also includes a mission-creation module.

Combat is a simple matter of pointing at enemy troops with the mouse and commanding the troops to attack. Experienced gamers may find the earlier missions more time consuming than challenging as at times the enemy AI seems about as cunning as a pebble. The player's troops, too, aren't the brightest lot and will often continue marching in some previously ordered direction even as an enemy walks by or moves in for attack. This requires that the player become adept at pointing and clicking specific commands. This provides an easy-to-use means of issuing orders to groups of troops, but these group commands are limited to four units.

What really sets *WarCraft* apart is its full-featured, multiplayer capability.

WarCraft will connect opponents head-to-head over a modem, a network or a direct link using two computers with a null modem cable. Gamers will find *WarCraft* a great introduction to head-to-head gaming. Any human player should offer more challenge than the AI.

WarCraft comes up short in terms of the diversity of game elements, though the "mission" model offsets this somewhat. In terms of graphic presentation, *WarCraft* is neither a standout product nor a laggard in this genre.

From a single-player perspective, *WarCraft* seems an overly derivative and not terribly inspiring title, rating maybe a C+. On the other hand, gamers who have a human opponent in mind should consider getting two copies of *WarCraft*. In head-to-head, *WarCraft* shines. ■ (David Gerding)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Blizzard
DESIGNER: Blizzard
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Warfare mgt.
HD SPACE: 14
PLAYERS: 1 (per system)
LEVELS: N/A

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COMPUTER QUEST OF THE CUTE & CUDDLY

Seek the damsel in distress in a *Relentless* adventure

A couple of years back, an unknown French developer released a title that proved there were still new ways to do an adventure game. The game, **Alone in the Dark**, used a then revolutionary polygon-based system to put the characters on the screen and make them move convincingly. The game drew a lot of praise, looked terrific and was even fun to play.

Alone in the Dark achieved a very cinematic look because its three-dimensional characters let the designers render each scene from different angles. One of the most powerful tricks of Hollywood is known as motivated camera angles. When the director wants an audience to

ing is smooth and some of the best yet in a game for the PC. There is a fun, cartoonish look to the world and its inhabitants that seems like a weird blend of Legoland meets *Alice in Wonderland*. Unfortunately, the designers chose an isometric perspective that precludes motivated camera angles.



feel threatened, for example, a low camera angle looking up at the subject creates an intimidating perspective on the world. It was primarily the use of camera angles that made **Alone in the Dark** so compelling.

Relentless: Twinsen's Adventure, was created by some of the original design team for **Alone in the Dark**. Adeline Software has implemented a next-generation polygon engine in **Relentless**. The SVGA graphics look fantastically sharp and the 3-D render-



The game takes place on the planet of Twinsen. The player takes the role of Twinsen who, naturally, seems destined to overthrow the evil tyrant Dr. Funfrock. Funfrock has taken over the planet and rules with an iron fist. When the game begins, Twinsen has already been imprisoned by Funfrock's forces. After the player escapes the prison complex, Twinsen is quickly recaptured, along with his girlfriend. The subsequent action is motivated by Twinsen's search for his girlfriend and the inevitable showdown with Dr. Funfrock.

The setting and silly names are one example of the lighthearted approach taken throughout the game. This breezy quality is refreshing. Given the trend toward "dark" games and ever-higher depictions of violence, **Relentless** is a game parents can play with their kids and is even mild enough to let kids play on their own. Of course, gamers who dislike all things cute and cuddly may dislike **Relentless** as well.

Sometimes the game's friendliness destroys the suspension of disbelief.

Characters within the game often give the player suggestions more appropriate to a game manual. Direct references to the interface (keys to press and the like), coming from characters within the game, feel awkward and remove the player from the game experience.

Despite the lighthearted nature of the story and setting, game play is sufficiently challenging. The player interacts with the world in four behavioral modes: Normal, Athletic, Aggressive and Discrete. As the mode is switched, the on-screen character's appearance and capabilities change. Players can talk to other characters in Normal Mode, sneak around in Discrete, jump over items in Athletic Mode and so on. Despite these capabilities, surviving early in the game is challenging because the enemies are everywhere. Players are advised to use Athletic Mode to run away from trouble early on.

Play involves accumulating life points to stay alive and the cash to get the items needed to accomplish the various subquests within the game. Twinsen fights his enemies with a magic ball that is both weapon and tool. The farther a player progresses in the game, the greater Twinsen's powers of combat and magic, but players should not expect rapid progress.

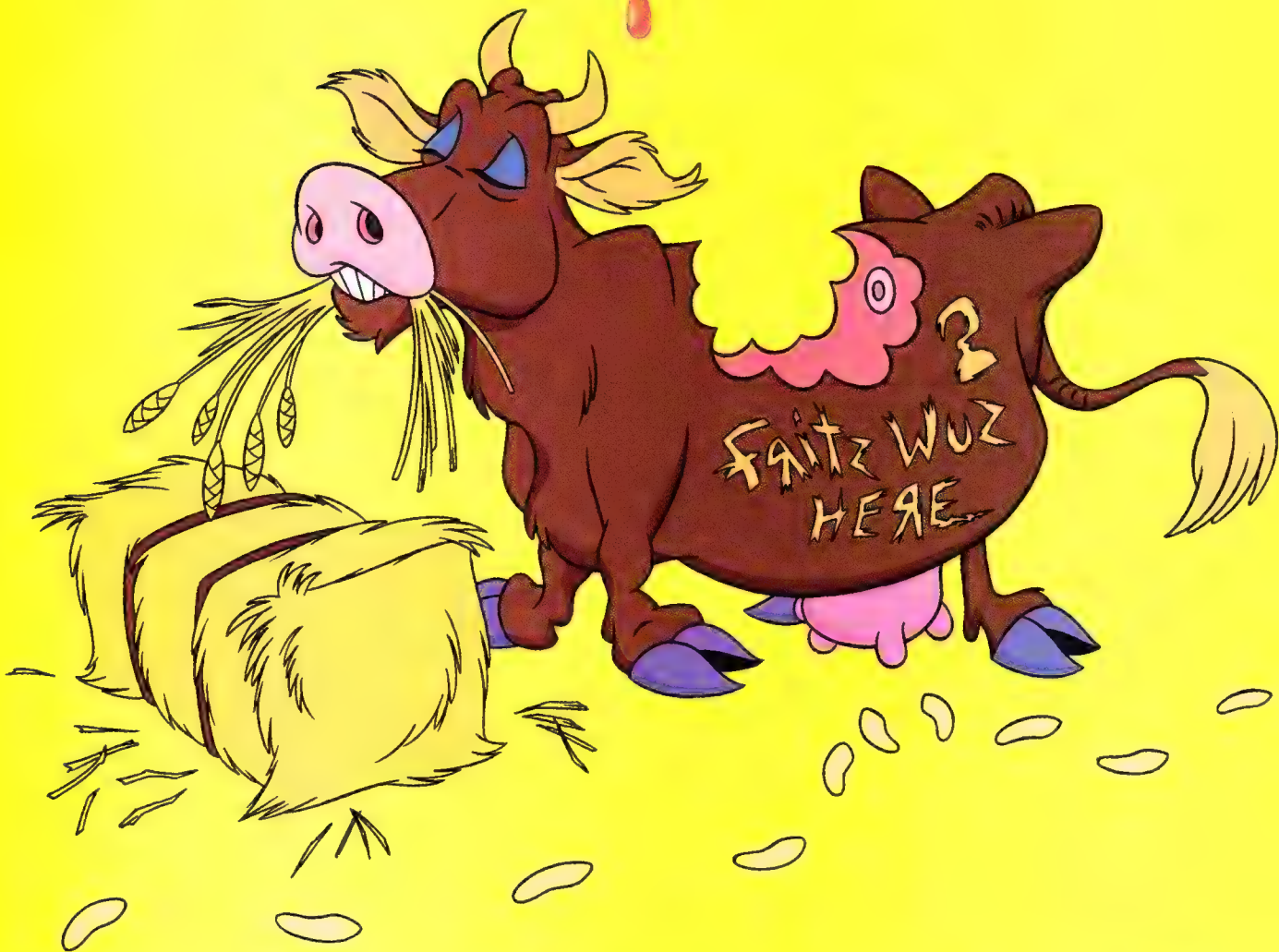
The game features an auto-save feature that saves at certain milestones, but the lack of a true save-game option means difficult portions of the game must be replayed far too many times. The soundtrack is very cinematic but is not keyed to on-screen action. There is also plenty of rendered animation to flesh out the game. Strong AI routines let the NPCs react realistically and appropriately to Twinsen's behavior.

Relentless has a lot going for it, both in technology and presentation. Yet, a somewhat trivial story line and annoying features like the lack of an easy-to-use, save-game function detract from an otherwise standout title. Adventure fans should take a look. **B-** (David Gerding)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DESIGNER: Adeline Software
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Adventure
HD SPACE: 11 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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EASY ROAD TO A SLOW DOOM

Blake Stone: Planet Strike! revisits familiar territory

Playing **Blake Stone: Planet Strike!** is like playing **Doom** while slogging through mud. The perspective is the same, the long corridors with baddies around each bend are the same, but Agent Blake Stone moves like he's wearing combat boots—even on a blazing Pentium PC.

Maybe it's just age. This is a sequel to **Aliens of Gold**, which came out long before **Doom** and other games that move at breakneck speed. There's no indication that anyone did anything about updating the game engine used for **Aliens of Gold**, which was licensed from id Software shortly after the amazing success of **Wolfenstein 3D**.

While **Planet Strike!**'s box claims it uses a faster version of the **Wolfenstein** engine, the box also shows a gorgeous blonde hanging on Stone's arm. She never appears in the game, and neither does the faster engine.

To make matters worse, the sound quality also shows signs of wear. When the aliens bark, "You're dead!" it's as if they're shouting through loose dentures.

The graphics, too, seem ancient after having battled through the magnificent settings of, say, **Doom II**. The lighting is garish, the coloring cartoonlike and everything looks the same regardless from which angle they are viewed. We're still wondering what's with the blood that constantly drips from the ceilings—is it merely an attempt to frighten Blake ... or a case of very bad plumbing?

The bottom line is that **Blake Stone** plays like a dated '50s sci-fi movie in an age when high-tech special effects are de rigeur.



That doesn't mean, however, that this isn't a good alternative for slightly younger gamers to the more gruesome fireplay in **Doom**. In fact, **Doom** is self-rated for players 17 and over, while **Blake** recommends that players be at least 13.

Its warnings of "graphic violence" can be taken with a grain of salt. When the lumpish aliens die, they collapse into a heap just like the Wicked Witch of the West.

It would be hard to imagine that fans of the original **Blake Stone** would be longing for this retread—after all, **Aliens of Gold**'s size was monstrous with its six missions and 66 levels. Nevertheless, nostalgic players who want one more shot at the evil Dr. Pyrus W. Goldfire have that opportunity here.

When we last left Goldfire, he'd lost his battle with Blake Stone and escaped to wherever villains escape to. Now he's back, having renewed his plans to take over the universe from his headquarters in the STAR Genetics Institute. His army of evil aliens is also back with a few new ones joining the ranks.

Many of the features that made **Aliens of Gold** unique have been recycled here. Some of the lab technicians who roam the halls are friendly, others are poised to shoot Stone in the back. The only way to tell the difference between friend or foe is to interrogate

each and every one of them—and hope not to be wiped out in the process.

Stone's energy still depends on his finding tokens to be inserted into food vending machines that seem to run out of victuals just when he is at his hungriest. And some aliens still disguise themselves as statues and potted plants.

Stone's auto-map has been upgraded so it now has several levels of magnification and if properly powered, can detect hidden pushwalls. Once again, leaning on a pushwall just once sometimes isn't enough. Players who find it a hassle to test every single wall for secret rooms will be thrilled about having to push a second or third time.

Otherwise, much of **Planet Strike!** covers familiar territory. Concealed rooms contain food, six different weapons, ammo and variously colored credit card keys need to be found before locked doors can be unlocked. At the end of each level, an explosive device must be successfully located and detonated next to a security cube before a teleporter can be used to warp to the next level.

Technically, **Planet Strike!** works like butter—installation is smooth and stressless, directions are on-screen and easily accessible, saving and loading are practically instantaneous and the game can be configured for slower PCs by eliminating certain lighting effects and graphics. Perhaps the ease with which **Planet Strike!** can be played is one of its weaknesses. Aliens rarely hide very well, and Stone's onboard computer, nicknamed REBA, constantly alerts him to impending dangers.

If gamers take the usual precautions and save frequently, there's little chance that they will need more than the original three lives to complete the game. In fact, while four difficulty levels are available, unless one cranks up the difficulty to "expert" or "veteran," **Planet Strike!**'s 20 levels can be played very quickly. Cheat codes are supplied, but can be ignored. ■ (Paul Hyman)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: FormGen/Apogee
DESIGNER: JAM Productions
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Action
HD SPACE: 5.2 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 20

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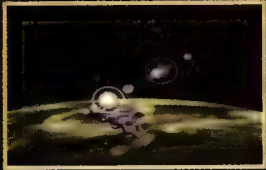
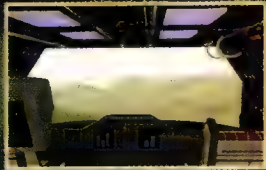
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RESTORE A SUNDERED WORLD

Wander the realms of fantasy via the *Death Gate*

Death Gate is based on the *NY Times* best-selling novels by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. This is a faithful adaptation of the characters and locations depicted in the original work. Even some of the original artwork has been incorporated into the game as Super VGA graphics. **Death Gate** gives fans of the series an opportunity to interact in a world they are already familiar with, aiding the suspension of disbelief.

Death Gate is set in a medieval world where magic is common. There are five races in this world: Elves, Dwarves, Humans, Sartans and Patryns.

The game begins about 2,000 years after the Sundering, an event which changed the world forever. Before this, the Sartans and Patryns were at war, and the Patryns were winning. The Sartans feared the Patryns would conquer the world and commanded the Dwarves to forge the "World Seal," containing the symbol of each of the five realms.

During the Sundering, the seal was destroyed. This ripped the world into five separate, unconnected realms, each with its own piece of the seal. Four of these realms represent the elements: Earth, Water, Fire and Air. The fifth is the Nexus in which lies the gate to the Labyrinth, a realm full of misery and danger, where the Sartans have imprisoned the entire Patryn race.

Players enter the game as Haplo, a Patryn who has just escaped through the final gate of the Labyrinth with the help of Lord Xar. Lord Xar plans to collect all of the seal pieces and reform the world, which is where Haplo comes in.

Xar sends Haplo to search each realm for its piece of the seal and return them to him. Haplo is also told to learn any new magic he can and gather any information about the Sartans. Players know a few spells at the beginning to get them started, but the remainder must be learned from other sources as they go through the game.

Flying boats are used to travel between the realms. Haplo begins with a Dragon Boat, which needs no crew and contains a magical "steering stone." This stone can guide the ship to any realm as long as the symbol is inscribed on the stone. Players start with only one and must find the rest in order to visit all five realms.

Haplo will encounter many people in his travels, all of whom can be helpful if the players play their cards right. In



order to obtain help from some people one must do them a favor. Some of these favors are easy and some more difficult, but all these obstacles must be overcome to complete the quest. NPC interaction is the heart of the game, in lieu of combat or spell casting emphasized in other titles.

The game controls are simple and easy to master. Movement is controlled with the mouse. There is a compass on the bottom left side; simply click on the desired direction and Haplo moves there—from one painted still life screen to another. Instead of showing the player-character walking or running, movement is simulated by screen changes, like the old **Wizardry** titles. In fact, were it not for some animated cut screens, **Death Gate** would be the quintessential '90s text adventure, in the tradition of Infocom and others of days gone by. A map feature comes in handy because remembering where everything is can be difficult.

Click on items to see the available manipulations in menu form, then select an action to perform it. For example, if

one finds a rock, the options might be "Pick Up," "Look At" or "Throw"; for a person they may be "Look At" or "Talk To." Some items must be used by other people or combined with other things before the desired effect is achieved.

The other method of interaction is through talking. When "Talk To" is selected, another menu appears: a list of things one can say to either initiate or continue a conversation. Conversations appear in text boxes on-screen. These are paralleled with some of the best digitized speech routines witnessed thus far.

They flow seamlessly and without delay from the CD, even when clicking through them quickly, which is a major technical feat of track stacking. The outcome of the conversation and the information one gains depends on the statements and questions chosen.

Fortunately, the designers of **Death Gate** have avoided the age-old trap of having too narrow a conversation tree. In some games, all roads lead to Rome, and the player is virtually assured of getting the right information if they just shoot their mouth off long enough. That definitely is not the case in **Death Gate**.

On a less positive note, the game requires entirely too much HD space in its optimum configuration. One can minimize the installation but then must deal with the normal access delays that are so wonderfully absent in the full installation. Could we please find some median ground here?

Some players will despise having to live on their wits alone, rather than their swords. Nevertheless, Legend must be commended for proving once again that substance always wins out over steel.

In the end, game making is storytelling, and **Death Gate** enjoys the efforts of two highly respected authors in the fantasy field. As such, if one is willing to travel back in time, at least in terms of the graphic presentation, one just might find a rich and rewarding experience. **B-** (Ed Dille)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Legend Entertainment
DESIGNER: Glen Dahlgren
SYSTEM: IBM MPC
THEME: Text Based Adventure
HD SPACE: 5 MB min/58 MB opt
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

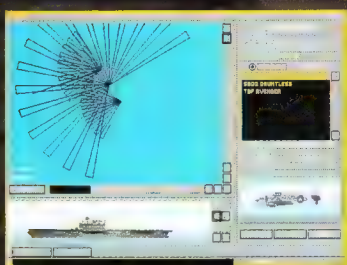
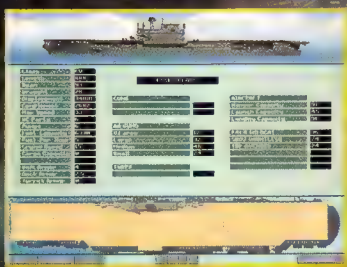
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IBM 256-COLOR SVGA DISPLAYS

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REVIEWS

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of a variety of entertainment software reviewers from around the country. Their critical appraisals of the latest software releases are presented here.

	Annie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Sтивен L. Kent L.A. Times
Aces of the Deep	B+	B+	B+	B+
Alone in the Dark II	A	A	A+	C
Arena Elder Scrolls	B	B	A-	B+
Armored Fist	A	B+	A	B-
Battle Bugs	B	B+	B+	D
Colonization	A-	A	A	A+
Dark Sun II	B	B	B	-
Dennis Miller	D	F	D	D
Doom II	A-	A-	A	B+
Flash Traffic	F	F	F	F
Formula One	B-	C	C+	C+
Global Domination	B	B	A	-
Harpoon II	A-	A-	B+	-
Hell	B-	B	C+	-
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	C+
Indy Car Racer	A	B+	B+	A
Lode Runner	B+	A-	B+	B
Lords of the Realm	C	C	B-	-
Master of Magic	-	B-	A	A
Metaltech: Earthsiege	B+	-	B+	C-
Microsoft Arcade	A	A	A	B+
Myst	B+	B+	A+	A+
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Operation Crusader	B+	B	B-	-
Operation Europe	B-	C	-	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	B
Power Poker	C+	C-	B	B
7th Guest	A-	A-	A	A-
Star Reach	B	B	B	B+
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
Ultima VIII: Pagan	A-	B	B+	B+
Under a Killing Moon	A	A+	A-	A+
Wolf	A-	B+	A-	A-
World of Xeen	B-	A+	C-	-
X-Com: UFO Defense	A-	A	-	A+



For all-out action and thrills, *Doom II* sets the standards in the PC market.

Risk Deluxe (*Interplay/Macintosh*) This second Mac version features variant rule options, customizable game play and a slightly more unpredictable AI. The streamlined interface makes it smoother. The game is difficult to interrupt; if one wants to quit during all but a small portion of the game turn, the computer must be turned off. A warning: **Risk** and screensavers are not compatible. The interface is a bit imprecise, or rather, too precise. Each country has a specific area that must be clicked on, and sometimes, this spot isn't where it should be.



The game play is pure **Risk** though, and the players don't have to remember the rules. **B+** (*John W. Hardin*)

ST: TIG Interactive Manual (*Simon & Schuster/Mac CD*) S&S's debut Apple QuickTime product boldly goes where no product has gone before: into the hearts and souls of hard-core Trekkers



everywhere. All of the info from Sternbach and Okuda's book is reproduced here, supplemented by in-character commentary and "inside info" from Jonathan "Commander William Riker" Frakes and Majel "Luxana Troi" Barrett Roddenberry (wife of the original series' creator).

IM provides an in-depth look into the massive bowels of the Enterprise, Starfleet's crown jewel. Utilizing actual sets, props and models, **IM** offers players glimpses of hundreds of objects, diagrams, text entries and episode clips. When posed with the question of whether or not to acquire this trekker's

bible, the only sane response is: "Make it so!" **A** (*Laurie Yates*)

Secrets of Stargate (*Compton's New Media/Win-Mac CD*) It was only a matter of time before someone got the bright idea to produce one of those behind-the-scenes movie documentaries (which have been accompanying CAV laserdisc movie editions and hyping big screens for years) in CD-ROM. **Secrets of Stargate** represents that debut "Making of" program, and the slick package includes almost two hours worth of special effects (sfx), backstage footage and interviews with key players. Fans with more specialized interests can also investigate costume and set designs, production stills, storyboards and other ephemera from the sci-fi epic with an Egyptology spin. **B** (*Bill Kunkel*)

Wyatt Earp's Old West (*Grolier's/Win CD*) Experiencing a simulated version of the Wild West has never been as educational and entertaining as it is in **WEOW**. While burdened by occasionally annoying, cranky hardware specs (the game requires a 100 percent compatible Microsoft mouse, for example, which means most users who purchased bundled PCs are shoot out of luck), the first-person POV and high-quality FMV make this a unique and entertaining ride. Players not only explore a Western town and learn about the people, places and events of the era, but also engage in unexpected quick-draw shootouts with the Clantons, Doc Holliday and other historical pistoleros—as well as less-fatal trivia showdowns. **WEOW** is worth the installation hassles for fans of the much-neglected American West (at least in the software world). Grolier's even upped the ante with an Old West mousepad that comes included in the package. **B+** (*Laurie Yates*)

The Essential Frankenstein (*Byron Preiss/MPC CD*) Victor Frankenstein's monster has made many appearances recently in film and interactive entertainment, but none as classy and as faithful to Mary Shelley's original vision as in **The Essential Frankenstein** from longtime graphic story impresario, Byron Preiss.

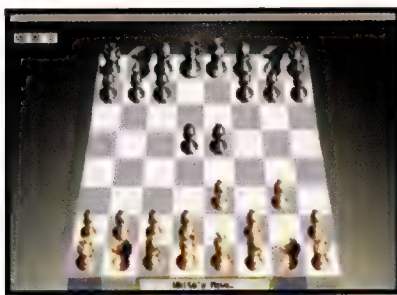
TEF enhances the fully annotated text of the original novel with period music, dramatic narrations and a plethora of visual images from familiar,

obscure sources, including still shots, movie trailer clips and archival images.

Additionally, users can access a video interview with horror literature expert Leonard Wolf, play a desktop-style minigame or even set up a screensaver (but of course). **The Essential Frankenstein** is a gothic immersion of such quality that one can truly say: "It lives! It's alive!" **A** (Laurie Yates)

Power Hits: Movies (Activision/MPC CD) This collection of four computer games based on movies from recent years is a great sack of shovelware. **The Rocketeer** was overshadowed by Cinemaware's **Rocket Ranger**, but it's still worth a look-see; **Hare Raising Havoc** is a lost action-puzzle classic starring Roger Rabbit & Co.; **Die Hard** is a mixed bag that disappeared during one of Activision's down periods; and **Ghostbusters II** is a definite "B". A nice bargain for new computer gamers seeking variety. **B+** (Bill Kunkel)

Sargon V (Activision/Macintosh) The Spracklens' classic, award-winning chess program marks its fifth generation with a winning combination of easy interface and lots of choices. Options



include a Tutorial Mode, a "Blindfold" Mode, and a Mate Finder which solves chess problems. Unlike Tournament Mode, the eight standard play levels allow take-backs, hints and variable time settings. Each dimensional option offers three styles of boards and pieces: 3-D is prettier, with neat backgrounds; and the 2-D is more utilitarian. The playlist shows all moves in coordinate, algebraic or descriptive notation. At an estimated 2300 rating on the USCF scale, **Sargon V** should be a match for most current masters, but play it on a fast Mac. **B+** (Ross Chamberlain)

Corpse Killer (Digital Pictures/Mac CD) If Roger Corman were still directing films and was somehow diverted to

multimedia, this is the kind of product he would produce. A collection of cut scenes involving zombies and mad sci-



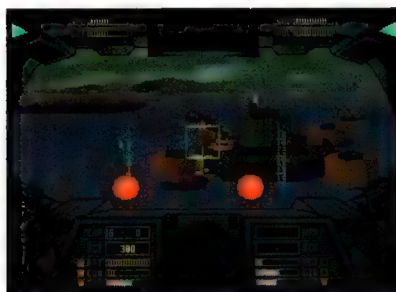
entists links together some first-person Hogan's Alley with rotting corpses instead of crooks. Exactly what it sounds like. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

Dress Shop 2.0 (Livingsoft/MS-DOS) The long-awaited sequel to the original **Dress Shop** finds the improvements well worth the wait. The additional clothing patterns—ranging from blouses to vests—and their varied design options allow talented hobbyists to create their own fashion patterns.

Users take from 60 to 102 measurements, accounting for their body shapes, enter them into **Dress Shop**, select the style and variations of the garment they want and the computer spews out a custom-fit pattern. Supports over a thousand printers. **B+** (Laurie Yates)

Retribution (Gremlin/PC)

This isn't *precisely* a low-end Wing Commander clone, but it has most of the essential elements. Using a backstory that was kind of witty in the '50s when it was the center of the *Twilight Zone* episode "To Serve Man," **Retribution's** premise is dated, and the flight model isn't much better. Sluggish control and difficult targeting are hallmarks, even using the best hardware. The game allows players to blow up aliens from an All-Terrain Vehicle or a



fighter craft that for some odd reason can't seem to perform a loop. Also, the

hardware limitations are annoying. Advanced Gravis fans will find that the game won't play ball with their Ultra-sound Max in any configuration. A Thrustmaster is just treated as a standard joystick, a real failing for a game with flight sim elements. The graphics are stunning, but the interface and game play will leave most game players less than stunned. **C-** (John P. Withers)

People: 20 Amazing Years of Pop Culture (Voyager/Macintosh CD)

America's favorite gossip and star-watching magazine inspired this entertainment title, which is also available for Windows. Suffused with all the glitz and shallowness of the parent magazine, **People: 20 Amazing Years of Pop Culture** is an interactive retrospective of the scandals, marriages and beautiful people that make *People* a supermarket check-out stand staple. A database holds more than 1,000 of the magazine's covers, and there's plenty of information available about the hot stories and personalities of the last two decades. The search procedure, based on three user-selectable keywords, turns up relevant stories for most of the possible combinations. Other modules track the Royals, show star connections and present interviews with photographers and editors behind the headlines. If you enjoy the printed version, the electronic one is even more entertaining. **B** (Arnie Katz)

TIE Fighter: Defender of the Empire

(LucasArts/MS-DOS) The latest installment in the ongoing and always popular,



Star Wars series uses the very efficient **TIE Fighter** engine in an exciting plot involving a rogue Imperial Admiral who has set his evil sights on Emperor Palpatine's gig. There are 22 new missions to conquer, along with previously unseen enemy spacecraft, and the chance to kick out the jams in a TIE Defender and the experimental Missile Boat. **A-** (Bill Kunkel)

DESERT STRIKE TOO!

Desert Strike: Return to the Gulf flies on the Game Boy

Just when we thought Desert Storm had blown over, players return to the Persian Gulf in a souped-up Apache attack helicopter, with which they must stop evil General Kilbaba and (all together now) save the world.

General Kilbaba, mad tyrant, lunatic and inimical despot, has threatened to start Armageddon and blow up the whole planet. What differentiates this nut from all the other religious terrorists in the Middle East is that the General can really carry through with his threat.

It's up to players to pilot a single AH-64 Super Apache Gunship helicopter into Kilbabaland and neutralize the General's military threat. There are three campaigns, each with six to eight missions, each mission consisting of multiple goals and tasks.



Before beginning a campaign, the player must choose a co-pilot. The co-pilot is responsible for aiming the weapons and lowering the winch, vital for rescuing the numerous MIAs and picking up fuel drums and ammo crates the enemy has thoughtfully left laying around. When the player picks up MIAs and returns them to the safe landing zone, the Apache's armor is repaired.



There are four co-pilots to choose from, each with different marksmanship and winch abilities. A fifth, very talented co-pilot is MIA. If the player can find and rescue him, he'll make a great choice for co-pilot.

The Apache is armed with a Chain Gun, Hydra Rockets and H-Fire missiles. The chain gun holds about 1,000 rounds and because of the relatively low rate of fire, has more-or-less unlimited ammo. The player begins with 38 Hydra rockets, good for the quick elimination of harder targets and annoying enemy gun placements. The H-Fire missiles only come eight at a time, but they are devastating against targets that need to be destroyed post-haste. It's interesting to note that H-Fires refers to Hell Fire missiles, but those Nintendo guidelines barring religious references are apparently still standing.

Neutralizing Kilbaba's military might unfolds in three campaigns. Mission One is Air Superiority. Here the player must eliminate the enemy's airfields. Before the airfields can be destroyed, the player must first take out the radar sights and the power plant. Finally, capture the enemy commander and discover where the secret agent is.

Once the player has established air superiority, it's time to take out the general's scuds in Campaign Two, Scud Buster. Before the scuds can be taken

out, the player must destroy the radar sites, then start a jailbreak and blow up the power plant. There are fewer crates of ammo and drums of oil left around in this stage.

Campaign Three is Nuclear Storm. The player must save the oil fields, stop the oil spills and finally remove the looming threat of Kilbaba for good.

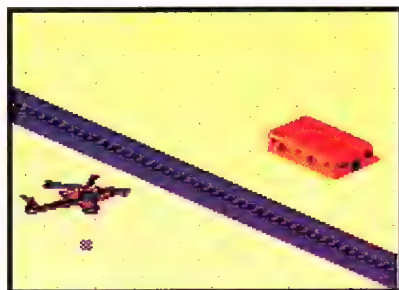
Although it's not entirely linear, the missions should be played in order.

Desert Strike: Return to the Gulf is not an easy game. Players will spend a lot of time bent over the Game Boy on this one. We recommend a Super Game Boy. Fortunately, passwords allow the player to return to a campaign in progress.

Auditory cues play a substantial role in Desert Strike. There is audible feedback for every action that the player makes, and for every message given to the player.

There's inobtrusive music, and cut scenes that use still pictures above text. These are written at about the fourth grade level, and there's no way to go through them at anything above turtle speed. Pressing start will skip them, but they need to be read at least once.

Graphically, **Desert Strike: Return to the Gulf** is above average for the



Game Boy. The Apache helicopter looks like a helicopter from all angles, there are numerous animations and the missiles streak through the air quite convincingly.

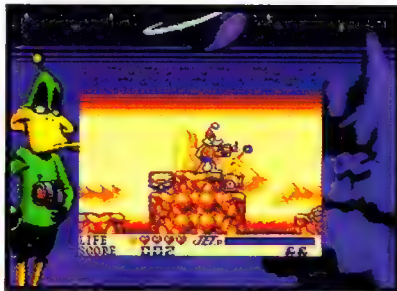
One of the best games on 16-Bit platforms has come to the Game Boy, and it's mostly intact. It's a challenge to master, but worth it. **B** (John W. Hardin)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: T-HQ
SYSTEM: Game Boy
THEME: Military
MEGABITS: 2
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 3

Wario Blast (Nintendo/Game Boy) A puzzle game for people who think they don't like puzzle games, **Wario Blast** mixes action, strategy and puzzle solving in an original, compulsively playable game for the portable system. As Wario or Bomberman, the player must strategically plant bombs in a maze to blow up obstacles, find power-ups and eliminate enemies. Every six rounds, the player battles a boss. Defeating the boss awards the player a special power, like the ability to throw bombs or drop multiple bombs. Simple concept, super game, with lots of challenging play life. A must for Game Boy owners. **A+** (John W. Hardin)

allow the player to take 10 minutes or to turn the timer off completely. As the bricks are removed, a picture of some locale from around the world is shown. An option turns this graphic off if the



player finds it too distracting. This game is perhaps not as intuitive as Pajnitov's masterpiece, **Tetris**, but it is still fun and very playable. **A** (John W. Hardin)

Itchy and Scratchy (Acclaim/Game Gear) This side-scroller seeks to achieve the same sort of over-the-top mayhem found in the cartoon within the cartoon, but falls short. Bart Simpson's favorite cat and mouse pursue each other with a variety of weapons like hatchets and hammers, through a series of different locations that parody hit movies like *Jurassic Park*. The graphics are below the Game Gear standard, and the action lacks luster. Itchy and Scratchy still don't have the respect, or the game, they deserve. **C** (John W. Hardin)

Daffy Duck: The Marvin Missions (Sunsoft/Game Boy) Here's another side-scrolling, platform jumper-shooter. This one features some beloved Warner Bros. characters, but the license is the only

thing that distinguishes this title from all other platform jumper shooters. The player guides Daffy Duck, armed with a low power pop gun and a jet pack, through multiple levels, against Marvin the Martian and his canine cohort. The characters are easily identifiable and the overall look is very Warner Bros.

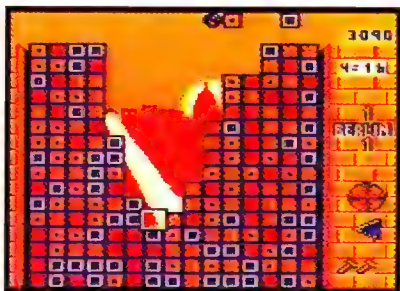
This game should be much more fun than it is, because it's a shame to see these classic characters wasted in such an unimaginative, repetitive game. Sorry, Sunsoft, but this duck is lame. **C-** (John W. Hardin)

Madden '95 (Nintendo/Game Boy) So, faithful portable grid maven, you have waited and you have prayed that some day the sports gurus at EA Sports would scale down the epic **John Madden Football** series and make it available.

Well, pigskin partisans, the good news is that **Madden '95** has arrived on the Game Boy. Now the bad news you say? The same plays work against the GB over and over—in one game, the great Emmitt Smith of Dallas ran for 927 yards, all on the exact same play! Emmitt is good but please, he's not that good! Whatever happened to Quality Assurance at NoA? **D-** (Bill Kunkel)



Breakthru! (Spectrum Holobyte/Game Boy) This installment of the Alexey Pajnitov Presents series is a puzzle



game that gives the player the task of removing multiple types of bricks from a wall. Only bricks that are touching other bricks of the same type may be removed from the wall. Bombs, rockets, soda cans, spiders and magic bricks are slowly added to the mix to keep players on their toes. The player has five minutes to solve each puzzle, but options

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TEEN SPECS

PUBLISHER: Club 300
DESIGNER: JuliAnn J. Appler
SYSTEM: 300
THEME: General Education
HD SPACE: N/A
PLAYERS: 1-5

At first look, *Station Invasion* would seem to be a product with unlimited potential: timed skill tests—in language arts, math, science, social studies, history, art and music—that automatically adjust to each child's ability, set against the backdrop of a television show produced at an all-kid TV station, appropriately called KID-TV.

However, a closer examination of the game reveals that this potentially golden software is instead mere pyrite.

Here's the setup: A group of kids have pooled their allowance, lemonade stand, newspaper route and dog-walking revenues to conduct a leveraged buy-out of a TV station. (Okay, so it isn't gritty reality) After removing all the adults from their positions of power, the youngsters take over.

As the game begins, the player has just been hired as a producer for one of five shows: *I'm Grounded*, in which a kid who is always restricted to his room still manages to have cool adventures; *Sundaes Of Our Lives*, a kideo soap opera set in the hotbed of an ice-cream shop; *Mysteries Shmysteries*, which examines every day problems,

Show provides KID-TV viewers with an Oprah-style talk show while the ever-popular *What's That Smell?* combines olfactory affronts with a "Name That Tune"-type contest in which adults (for a change) have to identify odious odors.

As producer, the gamer's role is to solve problems as they arise. If the



dilemma is resolved, then the show receives rating points. The show with the highest rating points at the end of a non-real-time 10-week period wins the Envy Award. The number of weeks not only correspond to the number of puzzles, but also provides gamers with windows of opportunity to "catch up" to their competing producers.

Accordingly, there are nine types of challenges that are divided into five subjects: fine arts (Master Pieces, Sound Trax), math (Backstage Blocks, Take 3), language arts (Mumbo Jumbo, Storyboard, Rewrite), science (Animal Audition) and of course, history (Who, What, Where).

The last week is Sweeps Week, and the ante is raised both in the quantity of points and the number of challenges. Children face three of the foremen-

tioned puzzles with two wildcards thrown in: "Skip a Problem" and "Lose a Problem."

While *Invasion* is set for 2nd graders, any player who is not a good—as well as fast—reader will need the help of someone who is. There isn't any way to activate the program to "read" all of the questions, so for most of the games players must be comfortable readers with good comprehension skills.

Even though *Invasion* can rightly claim a large representation of content areas, there is way too much repetition in the types of questions, and even in the questions themselves. After six playing hours, the same questions were cropping up so regularly, it was obvious that the randomizer had run out of fresh

material. Even with the range of difficulty levels, this is not a program that will grow with the child, per se, nor one that children will consistently return to.

One reason for a sustained lack of enthusiasm could be the "foreign" nature of the program setting. If a child is going to be the producer of a television program, they should be given more involvement than the meagre cut scenes allow. Even then we have to presume that children want to be TV producers, a dubious supposition at best.

Also, because of the competitive nature of the program, *Invasion* only becomes fun if there are two or more players. Unfortunately, the more players, the more repetition of questions.

Station Invasion is close, but this pilot probably won't sell all that well.

B+ (Laurie Yates)



such as "Where do lost socks go?" and "Why is there always one shoe lying by the side of the road?" The *Sopha Sinfree*

GAMES IN FOCUS

Amid all the concern and dire predictions about the state of education, there is actually some research being done that sheds some light on the situation and holds out some hope for the future.

The Department of Computer Science at the University of British Columbia completed two important studies, evaluating the misconceptions surrounding children and electronic games and the use of computer education in the classroom.

The results were heartening in the boys studied. First, they found no support for the conception that video games encourage antisocial behavior. Second, although most boys play games with violent themes, it has been determined that they also seek out games with mental challenges. Third, rather than becoming "addicted," most boys who play video games also do well in school.

There are definite differences in the ways boys and girls play. First, they found girls like computer games more than video games. Second, girls are more interested in the characters and story than the action. Third, girls like to feel confident when playing games in social settings, and often stop when frustrated or over-challenged.

In the third study, it was determined that children learn more in collaborative play in the classroom than solo, and work together best in groups that are small enough to permit the children to interact and help each other throughout the game.

These results point game designers to new styles of educational software that capitalizes on challenge and group play, but with strong characterizations and story lines.

The answers to our educational woes are not simple nor easy to discover. But it's nice to know someone is working on them.

WordStuff (*Sanctuary Woods/Win or Mac CD/Ages 3-6*) relies on a click-and-point interface and narration to keep the pre-reader entertained while learning simple words. Three activities teach the names of animals and objects, as anima-



tions illustrate them. There are plenty of surprise pop-ups, and a whimsical sense of humor throughout. Learning is reinforced by spoken words that are printed on screen during the explorations. The songbook portion lets kids record themselves (if they have a mike). Graphics are bright and cheerful, and the embedded surprise animations are genuinely clever. The program is ticklish about the sound card requirements, but should work with most Sound Blaster compatibles. **B+** (*Joyce Worley*)

Professor Multimedia Version 2

(*Individual Software/Win CD/Ages 12-Adult*) The burning question most new computer users have is "What is ___?" Unfortunately, most answers come forth in techno-gibberish.

Professor Multimedia and its companion program, **Multimedia Insider**, introduces Photo CDs, Interactive Television, Video Telecommunications, the Internet and much more, in simple, concise English. It details multimedia elements and their array of terms, including graphic resolution; sound, both WAVE and MIDI; animation styles, such as frame, object, morphing and 3D; video capturing and incorporating live-action footage. There're also discussions of the multimedia computer and video/audio accessories to enhance multimedia presentation. **A** (*Laurie Yates*)

Rescue the Scientists (*Compton's New Media/Win CD/Ages 8-Adult*) Alien takeovers of Earth have been popular since H.G. Wells, but the insidious Glixerians from Glixer II are kidnapping Earth's most celebrated scientists—both modern and ancient, wiping their memories, and destroying their creations.

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The Farm - Junior Encyclopedias

(*Humongous/Win CD/Ages 3-8*) This is a new way to do an encyclopedia. It starts with an overhead view of the entire farm, with each area clearly shown. A click changes the scene to a close-up of one of the 30 spots. Point-and-clicks produce animations, and other icons lead to details and explana-



tions. Buzzy the Knowledge Bug appears when called; he tells jokes, suggests things to explore and provides more details. Humongous did a great job on this. **A** (*Joyce Worley*)

Discovering Endangered Wildlife

(*Lyria/Win CD/Ages 8-Adult*) Word search, comparison games, tic-tac-toe, jigsaws and scrambles are coupled with still photos, videos and animal sounds,



to produce an open-ended experience in animal knowledge. It is coupled with an adventure to save many endangered species. This program is suitable for the entire family and successfully teaches concern along with the names, using outstanding photography along the way. **A** (*Joyce Worley*)

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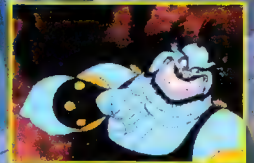
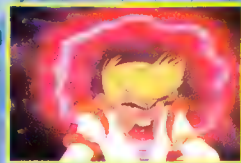
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THE ART OF WAR: EARTH VS. ALIENS

X-COM UFO Defense: The Official Strategy Guide, David Ellis, Prima Publishing, 384 pages (softbound, \$19.95)

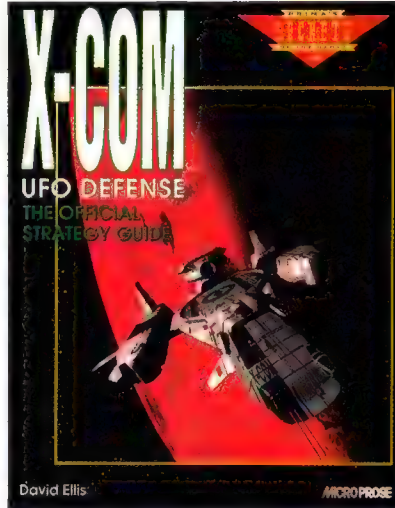
The blurb on the back cover says, "It's the year 1999, and the world is turning ... for the worse!" But this time, it's not our fault. It seems that the beings behind UFOs are not Spielberg's benign creatures playing cheery tunes, but as Ellis puts it, "In their case, the goal is the eradication of the human race and the complete domination of Earth."

X-COM is an international military organization created to defend the Earth from the alien invasion. It is supported financially by participating governments, but it must justify its existence, hire its personnel and purchase its materiel (or liberate, at some cost, equipment and weapons from the aliens).

To judge from the size and amount of detail Ellis has crammed into this book, **X-COM UFO Defense** is an incredibly complex game. MicroProse released an earlier version called **UFO: Enemy Unknown** in Europe, but its designer, Julian Gollop of Mythos Games Ltd., notes in an appendix that its tactical combat system originated in **Rebelstar Raiders**, made for the Sinclair Spectrum in 1983. In expanding the concept for MicroProse, he researched the UFO phenomenon, and added strategic elements and a reasonably unpredictable AI system for the aliens until, he says, it became "an interesting blend of strategy, tactics and resource management."

Micromanagement might be the term. Like **Outpost** or **Microsoft Space Simulator**, this at first appears to be a game in which the player will get so swamped in the minutiae of supporting details that the overall gist of the game gets lost. In reality, many computer gamers seek out such simulation-level games and enjoy the verisimilitude they bring to what could (in this case) be just another blast-'em-all shooter.

Ellis does lead off with a "hook"—an extract from the journal of an X-COM captain's brush with the aliens. It could be a couple of pages from any rousing adventure novel, full of bloodthirsty



action and a nod or two to pathos. It also introduces several types of aliens and other elements to be detailed later.

The first chapter is mainly a guide to using the rest of the book, explaining the author's approach, the object of the game and scoring. The latter two are not as directly associated as in most games: The object is not to get the highest score possible, but simply to get rid of the aliens, once and for all. The comprehensive scoring system merely measures the degree of one's success in developing and maintaining the X-COM operation. Alien activities, too, are scored, and the balance between the two measures the effort to win against them.

Chapter 2 introduces the Geoscape screen, featuring a zoomable view of the Earth. This is the primary interface on which the player will monitor UFO activity and launch missions, choose the location of bases and find alien bases. Here can be opened a variety of status windows and control options, including game time controls which allow the player to proceed in increments ranging from five-second to one-day intervals.

The next chapter discusses X-COM bases, detailing their layout and functions, the strategies (and even the politics) involved in their placement and recommendations on design. Chapter 4

goes into the craft, equipment and weapons with which to stock the bases. This includes cost, manufacturing time and required materials for human-originated equipment, plus acquisition of and research into alien technology.

The fifth chapter discusses the financing of X-COM operations, including managing income from participating nations, expenditures on materiel and personnel. It even argues for running "garage sales" for obsolete equipment and accumulated artifacts. Chapter 6 goes into detail on research and manufacturing, including staffing and time required for projects.

Players impatient to get into the action will find the seventh chapter, Intercepting UFOs, to their liking. This touches on detection, types of UFO, selection of intercept craft and air-to-air combat. Chapter 8 contains 56 pages under the heading Soldiers, Movement and Combat. Military personnel are not cannon fodder in this game: They have names, skills and characteristics more detailed than in some RPGs. Dossiers include missions joined and numbers of aliens killed.

Battles take place on a Battlescape screen, and instead of using "real" game time, are turn-based. Undoubtedly this is the part of the game based on Gollop's original **Rebelstar** engine.

In Chapter 9 we get to learn intimate details of the panoply of aliens X-COM has been fighting all this time. They are a motley lot, with some rather clever innovations even to long-time science-fiction fans. Five two-page tables (one for each level of game difficulty) define their characteristics in more detail.

Chapter 10 covers ground assaults (preparation, equipment and research value) and Chapter 11 concentrates on the final assault on the aliens' Martian base, including preparation of The Avenger, X-COM's only space vehicle.

Chapter 12 is a compilation of expert advice from members of MicroProse's staff who have played for many hours through many missions. In Appendix A, Gollop recounts the game's history, and Appendix B is a glossary.

While game owners may play it successfully just by diving right in with a glance or two (or many) at the manual, this volume could aid them in countless ways that might never occur to them otherwise. Who knows? It could save the Earth! (*Ross Chamberlain*)

TO THE MOON, TEX MURPHY!

Under a Killing Moon: The Official Strategy Guide, Rick Barba, Prima Publishing, 272 pages (softbound, \$19.95)

One of the most ambitious games ever produced now has a suitable volume to help the player get through it and still enjoy playing. Rick Barba put this book together in three primary sections—a fictionalized retelling of the story, a straightforward run-through and, finally, interviews with the creators of **Under a Killing Moon**.

The novella, which takes up about two thirds of the book, is thoroughly illustrated with screenshots. It's told from the first-person point of view by Tex Murphy himself. Barba's re-creation of Murphy's narrative is drawn to a great extent from the script, but embellished with some events and insights not necessarily appearing on the monitor screen. Some of the creative leeway was undoubtedly aided by conversations with Chris Jones ("Tex Murphy") and



others involved in the production. All together, the writing is perhaps not going to garner Barba the mantle of Dashiell Hammett or Ross McDonald, but, in fitting with its subject matter, it's

fast paced and witty. The screen shot captions bolster the mood without being extracted from the text, but together with the text, provide plenty of information useful to the player, amusement or both.

The novella is divided into the seven days of events that follow the game play. So is the step-by-step walkthrough. Each action during the game is worth points, and these numbers are provided with the descriptions. Barba points out that the sequence offered is not the only possible way to play through the game, but it is the optimal one to reach the ideal total of a thousand points. Indeed, he says he did even better than that!

The concluding interviews with Chris Jones and Aaron Connors not only offer insight into the background of the making of the game, but also into the people themselves; not only where they're coming from but successfully sharing their delight in the creation of **Under a Killing Moon** and in working with the stars—James Earl Jones, Brian Keith, Margot Kidder and Russell Means.

Unquestionably, the book will enhance the experience for those playing the game—or helping the sometimes hapless Tex Murphy get through it—as well. (Ross Chamberlain)

MANAGING SNES

Conquering Super Nintendo Games, Jeff Rovin, St. Martin's Paperbacks, 256 pages (Softbound, \$4.99)

Jeff Rovin bills himself as the Gamemaster, and indeed, technically the title of the book includes that handle, as does its companion book *Gamemaster: Conquering Sega Genesis Games*. This one includes substantial coverage for more than 90 games (a page or two each) plus short takes (two to four per page) on almost 120 more titles. Games discussed range from classics like **Super Mario World**, **Prince of Persia** and **The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past** through **Mortal Kombat** (not MKII), **Aladdin** and **The Lost Vikings**, to **The Addams Family**, **Jurassic Park** and **Secret of Mana**.

In the first group of games, most of the help consists of a brief story description, a strategy walk-through sequence

and comments, including Rovin's own intelligent and fairly comprehensive ratings for violence. Where passwords are required to change levels, these are often listed as well.

Most of the brief listings in the last few pages of the book (under the heading Super NES Short-Shots—don't be confused by the contents-page listing as NES Short Takes), consist of such passwords, other special purpose "secret" codes and the occasional set of Pro Action Replay or Game Genie codes.

Rovin is outspoken against attempts to legislate video game content or sales, and comments on this in both his introduction and an afterword. The violence ratings he does provide are an acknowledgement of parents' concerns. They are



N for no violence, C for cartoon violence, S for slapstick, NG for non-graphic, G for graphic and XG for extremely graphic ("the equivalent of a video game splatter/slasher movie"). Yes, **Mortal Kombat** got that one.

The end of the book contains several pages for notes and passwords. Gamers with many games should go for it, especially at this price. (Ross Chamberlain)

DEALS

Headlights Comin' Down the Road

If you have not noticed by now, one of my favorite pastimes is to follow the news about John Malone or Bill Gates, as well as any major Digitrends that affect the on-line area. Both of them are fascinating, bigger-than-life individuals who are making a difference in the way we currently see and interact with things. Each of them is a significant player in the Digiverse.

Last month, I wrote about ATT buying out my close friend Ken William's ImagiNation Network. Then, recently, ATT bought out Ziff Interchange Service. Well, not to be outdone, John and Bill got together and announced a few things of their own.

In October '94, John was busily releasing a news item that many of you may have missed. It read: "Tele-Communications, Inc. plans to spend \$200 million in the next year to boost developers' efforts to forge networked multimedia applications."

What TCI was doing was a maverick move. It was putting out a call to authors to bring their best materials forward and join in early development so that materials would be ready once the pipeline reaches homes.

Spending \$200 million on this area is a major move. Where is the pipeline that he plans on filling and with whom in development is he really going to work? Does he see it as a network approach? Where is he going with this stuff?

Well, very soon, the answers come into play. If you recall, I wrote about TCI and Acclaim a while ago. I wrote about Blockbuster and Viacom as well. Now another news event occurs and the picture unfolds a little bit further. On Dec. 22, 1994, the wires carried the following item, which I am sure few missed.

REDMOND, WASHINGTON, U.S.A.,
1994 DEC 22 (NB)—Englewood, Colorado-based Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI) has



bought a 20 percent stake in Microsoft's yet-to-launch on-line service, Microsoft Network.

The deal was announced after the fact and placed a \$625 million value on the new Microsoft Network. Even Trip Hawkins should be glad to see that someone else can raise so much money for something that does not exist yet.

Microsoft said the partnership provides the Microsoft Network with the technical support needed to develop services that can run over cable TV, which offers better sound and video quality than that carried over a phone wire. Microsoft Network is expected to launch as a subscription service accessed via a modem-equipped personal computer via telephone lines. The on-line service is scheduled to become available when Windows '95, the next version of Microsoft's Windows operating environment, is in the hands of users.

TCI said it has nearly 20 million subscribers to its basic cable TV service in 48 states and will offer Microsoft Network to those homes when the service becomes available. It also owns interests in other cable networks that include Cable News Network and Home Shopping Network. This is not the first venture involving Microsoft and TCI. The two companies announced

earlier they will launch a computer television channel next year and are also working on a test of an interactive television system.

An official at TCI also said on-line services "are a key element for our customers, and this gives us the ability to offer current services and, as we build out our broadband networks, offer The Microsoft Network as a high-speed, interactive on-line service."

What do we make of all of this? One thing is certain, Microsoft Network is off to a big start. All the screaming that occurred from AOL and other services when they were told that Microsoft Network would be in Windows '95 is nothing compared to what could possibly happen going forward.

I would imagine that we will see some major shifts in the ways that the current on-line services distribute their information. We are already seeing Delphi, CompuServe, AOL and Prodigy move toward Internet browser capability, and I have always said that all services will speak to all services.

I look forward to the day when I can get information on virtually any subject any-time, anyplace. This is the direction of the on-line services.

.....
by Barry Friedman
President, International Computer Group

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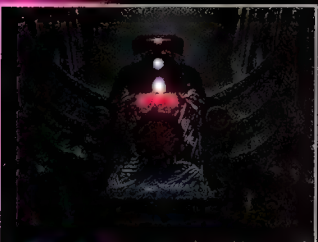
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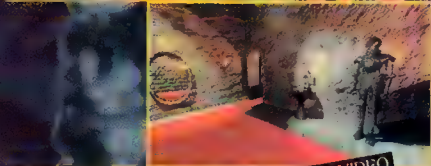
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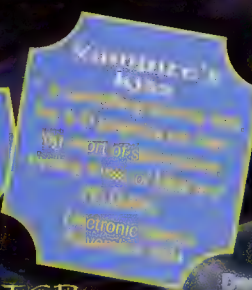
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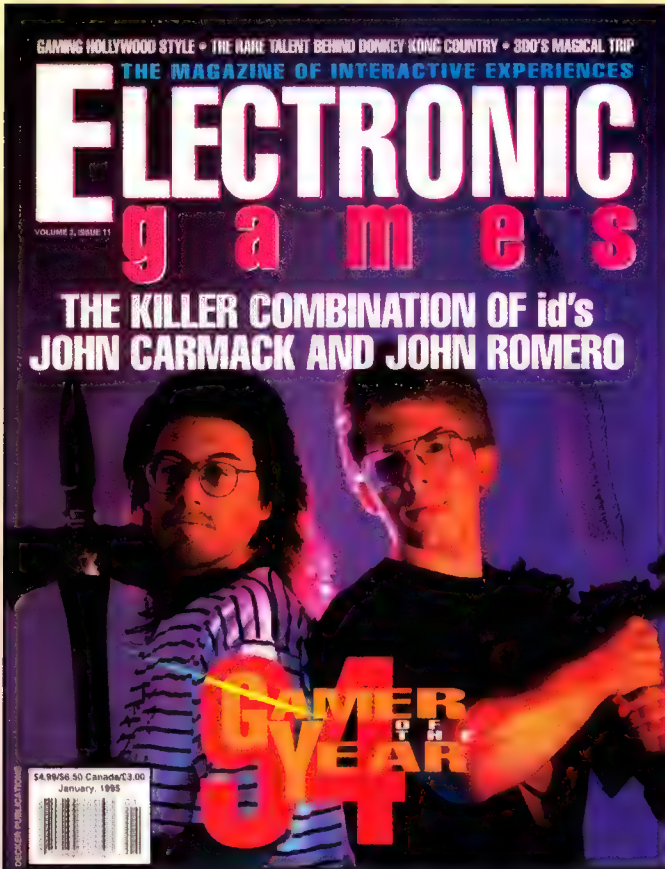
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THE KUNKEL REPORT

UNDERCOOKED SHEFF

In an installment of this column from last year, I wrote at length about a book called *Game Over* by veteran freelancer, David Sheff. Despite some sloppy reportage and Sheff's astonishing gullibility when dealing with "big shots," the book remains a must-read; a history of Nintendo's breakthrough in both Japan and the U.S. with all the players, all the drama and at times, all the high stakes tension of a legitimate fiction thriller.

The downside of all this, however, is that we seem to have convinced Sheff that he is something other than a freelance writer with a few solid credits (*Playboy* and *Rolling Stone*, primarily) and an "in" at Nintendo.

No, he is now an avatar who brings warnings to "savvy" parents everywhere about the menace of electronic gaming. Oh boy.

Video Games—A Guide for Savvy Parents (Random House) is an outrageously disinformational screed strongly reminiscent of Dr. Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*, that was responsible for demonizing comic books as the primary source of juvenile delinquency in 1950s America. Like Wertham, Sheff's tract is full of outrageous errors, faulty logic and vague generalizations.

He also follows in Wertham's footsteps by assuming that video games are the sole province of children. As a result of the good doctor's work, comics were soon condemned to the ghetto of kiddie trash and placed under the domain of a group of censors called the Comics Code Authority.

Unlike Wertham (who was senior psychiatrist for the New York Department of Hospitals), however, Sheff has no real expertise in the electronic gaming field, and he proves it on virtually every page. Some special bits:

- In an attempt to build fear in his readers' hearts, he cites this amazing bit of prognostication from an unnamed "prominent futurist": "[He] foresees a time when video game machines with far greater powers will be as commonplace as toasters." These "far greater powers," we are to assume, will probably include auto-genocide and animal torture software.

- Useless psychiatric analysis provided constantly by the author's adolescent son, who offers such pearls as: "It's good you don't let me play video games so much. J— plays every morning before school and at night until he goes to bed, and he is getting weirder every day." Case closed.

- There are so many errors in this book it would take another volume just to correct them. He tells us Commodore—which is out of business—is producing a new system; then, while running through the genealogy of Sonic, confuses **Sonic 2** with **Sonic CD**. He then follows his incessant lectures about the awful violence in video games with a plug for **Mutant League Hockey**, perhaps the most violent sports game ever produced.

- There's no shortage of Sheffian "proof" that video games are evil. "One study of playground behavior of 600 children found aggressive behavior increased 80 percent on days that they played violent video games," he proclaims at one point, sans consideration of how diet, movies, TV, etc., may have been factors. We are never told what actually constitutes a "violent" video game—especially since so many of Sheff's personal favorites include lots of aggressive activity.

- Though I'm tight on space, I must share this pointless bit of wisdom: "A large majority of the experts I spoke with believe that video games are worse than TV because the child takes part in the blood and gore."

What bugged me the most was that Sheff never once turned on his old chums at Nintendo. Despite the fact that this book contains extensive material produced post-SCES '94 (when Nintendo announced that hard-core rock bands Sweaty Nipples and the Butthole Surfers had signed on and that they would never again make the mistake of releasing a bloodless **Mortal Kombat**), Sheff somehow manages to avoid any mention whatsoever of a shift in Nintendo's policy, while he's still beating Sega over the head with a dismembered arm for releasing **Night Trap!**

Dave, please go back to *Playboy*, okay?

by Bill Kunkel

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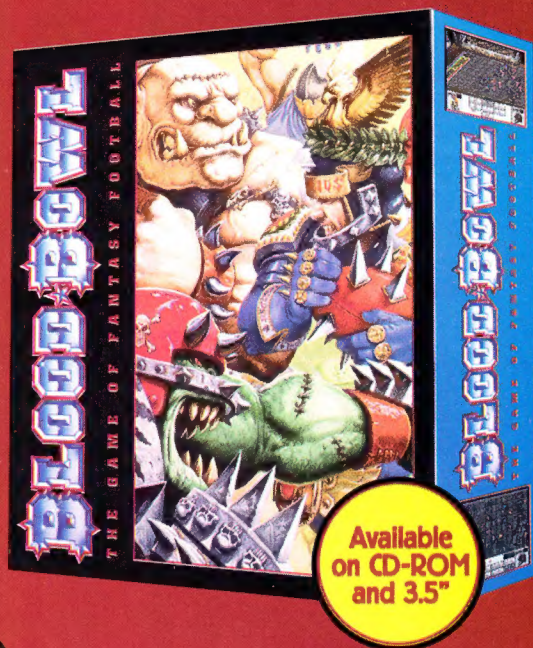
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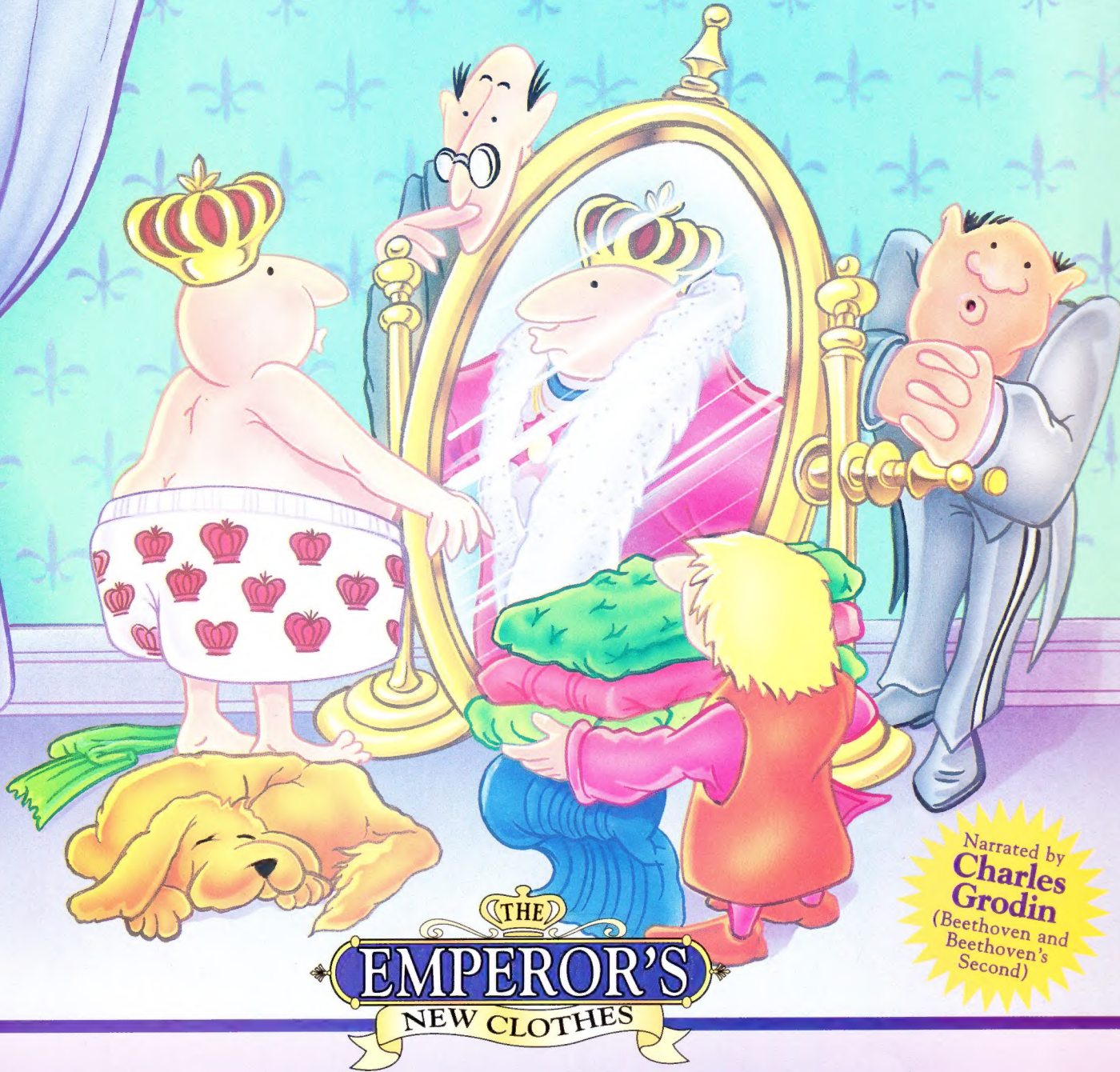
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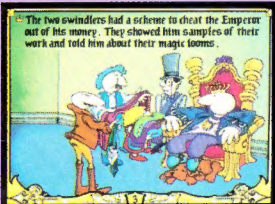
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