

SEGA'S WONDERFUL TOY MAN • AL LOWE: LOOKIN' FOR ROMANCE • SIERRA'S FRONT PAGE HOME RUN

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

ELECTRONIC games

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SUMMER
PREVIEW

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April, 1995



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RISE OF THE TRIAD

D A R K W A R

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POWER ON

Infomaniacs Meet the Gamers

Analogies are limited. A highway is a lousy metaphor for the world-girdling data network that is growing faster than even last decade's optimists predicted. It falls down, as analogies ultimately do, because it describes something unprecedented in existing terms. For one thing, the connections aren't as linear, or as fixed, as miles of blacktop.

Yet the highway imagery continues to get a workout by print and electronic journalists. It's not perfect, but it has just enough applicability to make it extremely useful. It doesn't precisely describe the reality of the network, but it's close enough to catch on as the slang term. When someone says or writes "information highway," the rest of us immediately understand the reference.

The highway analogy is sometimes handy. For example, highways are non-specific traffic conduits. It's there for anyone who obeys the rules of the road.

The highway patrol car, the vacation camper and the 16-wheeler all zoom down the same highway, perhaps even headed to the same destination. Each may have a different reason for making the trip.

That's true of the digital highway, too. It links people, institutions and services electronically, but the nature of the data traffic is irrelevant. When I log on, the highway doesn't know or care whether I am browsing the World Wide Web or flirting with a woman in New Jersey in a chat area. It's all just bits of data moving along the highway.

The media has recently discovered the Internet, but it has been around for years. Prior to 1993, however, it was mostly a tool for scientists and scholars.

To the academicians, the Internet was, and is, a tool. It lets them retrieve information, swap reports and perform other, similarly serious activities.

That digital Ivory Tower is tottering. People are rushing onto the Internet for unabashedly frivolous purposes, as the media beats the drums for cyberspace's most alluring tourist spots. At this rate, it won't be long before the stolid, old Internet



will be just a memory for sharing at late-night bar sessions at scientific conclaves.

Why has the Internet suddenly become the world's virtual playground? Credit the work of the high-profile computer networks.

As cybersurfers know, the Internet is a vast expanse with few landmarks. In that way, it's more like a solar system of planets and moons than a highway with on- and off-ramps. Most pioneering Internet users weren't looking for social interaction, so few mourned the absence of such features.

Some even felt that chaos had its positive aspect, too. Combined with a user-unfriendly interface, the unstructured environment kept Internet free of annoying sightseers.

America Online, Prodigy and INN triggered the democratization of the Internet. These services offer a structure, a sense of digital community, that entertainment-minded netizens find much more congenial.

Don't underestimate the power of a good interface, either. The fastest-growing service, AOL, has the most elegant command control system, and that's no coincidence.

Sophisticated net browsing software is readily available for both Macintosh and PCs. And sometime before the end of the year, the latter will have **Windows '95** with built-in support for AOL, Prodigy, the

Microsoft Network and Internet.

The collision of attitudes is shaking up cyberspace. Already, it's hard to get those ultra-cheap Internet deals everyone took for granted a year or two ago.

Also in jeopardy is the federal government's view of the Internet as a non-profit activity. The more users Internet acquires, the more attractive it becomes to commercial providers of information and services, including games. The government isn't blind to the money-earning potential, so subsidies are likely to end in the near future.

From the point of view of gamers, we've only just begun to experience the power of the Internet. With modem and network games proliferating and Webchat a reality, the Internet will soon become an important entertainment delivery system.

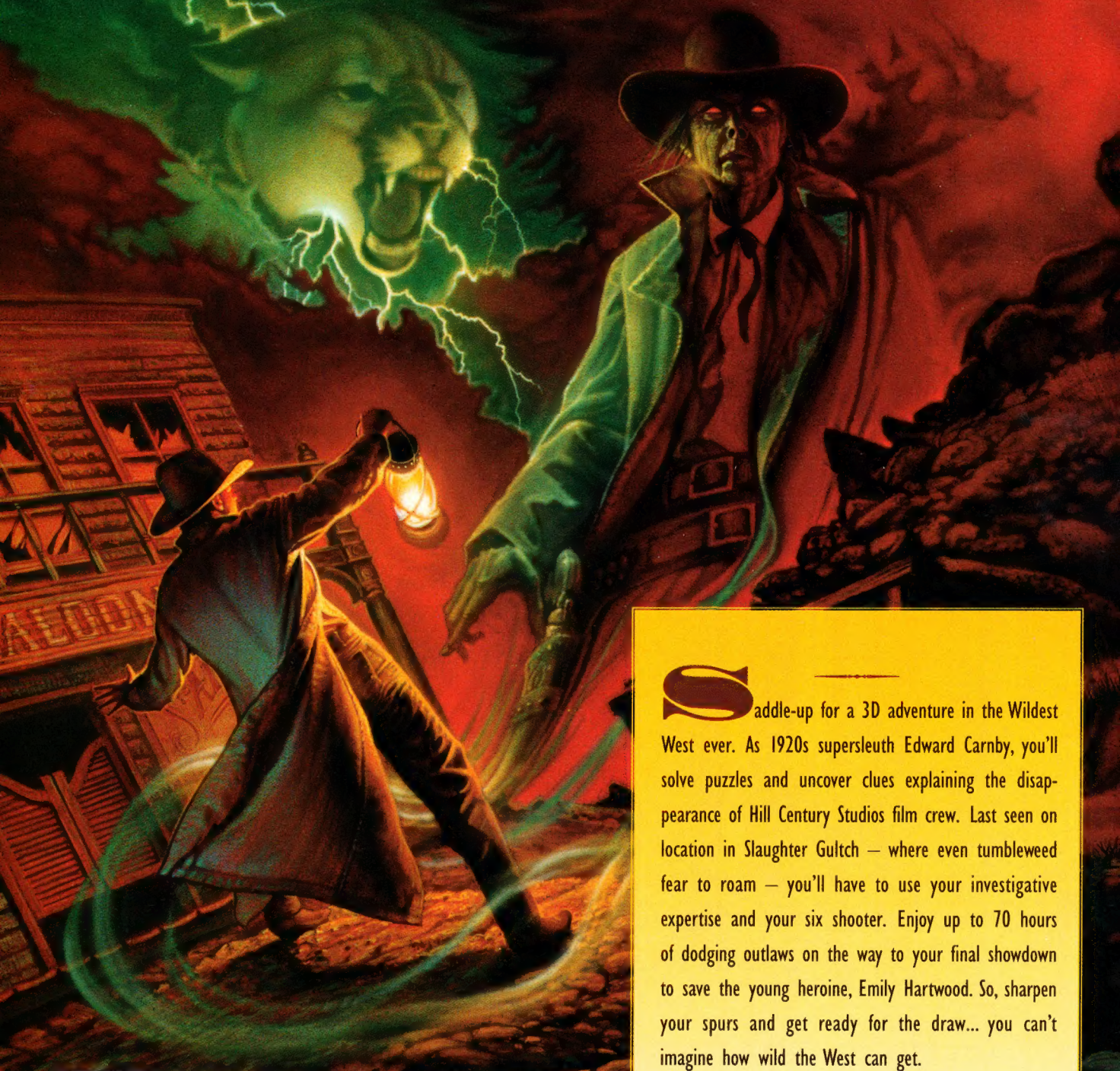
That's why EG traveled the extra mile and tripled net coverage in the last year. When you buy entertainment hours on-line, we want to help guide the purchase to produce the most fun.

When you want to share your views or opinions, we're at: ElecGames@aol.com. We love e-mail, especially yours.

.....
by Arnie Katz

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

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



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FEEDBACK

The Generation Gap?

The magazine looks nice these days. I do miss the comments from the designers of the games, because for an up-and-coming designer such as myself, these comments alone are worth the price of the magazine. (Which I now have a subscription to through April 1999!)

In *The Final Grade*, someone slap Steven Kent. Giving a D+ to **Tempest 2000** is an incomprehensible act. While I suppose he is entitled to some leeway in his assessment of the game, **Tempest** is arguably one of the greatest-playing video games ever, and certainly the best game to hit the home market in the past 10 years. While some may not like the style of the game, the greatness and solidity of its game play cannot be argued. The Yak did a terrific programming job—it is a true masterpiece. How [Kent's] other ratings can be acceptable and this one so absurd is beyond explanation.

What the heck, I'll just get to my main point. Today's games are garbage, and the average gamer is an idiot. My motto has been for many years, the same as yours, "The play's the thing." What makes or breaks a video game is game play, at least in my mind. Today's gamer doesn't even have a clue as to what truly good game play is. Why is this? I really don't know.

For example, in the best arcade back home (it takes over an hour to drive to a good one), I find two **Killer Instincts** and one **Virtua Fighter 2**. **Killer Instinct** is a pretty game to look at, at first. Everyone gawks at the graphics, but big deal—it is spitting out bitmaps of prerendered figures, just like the oh-so-overblown **Donkey Kong Country**. Once someone gets past the gee-whiz factor of the graphics, they should see how ugly this game is. The play mechanic is



awful. The game play is even more so. Collision detection is horrible. By my standards, **Killer Instinct** is really the worst video game in recent memory, taking that position from **MKII**, which in turn had taken it from **MKI**.

Then there is **VF2**. Perhaps not as gee-whiz, the graphics are much more impressive from a technical standpoint. The game is much more complex, controls better and while not being a great game by any stretch of the imagination, it is a much better piece of programming and a much better video game than **KI** could ever hope to be. In this arcade, **KI** is set at 75 cents, **VF2** at 50 cents. Clearly, **VF2** was the game being played, right? Nothing could be further from the truth. I watched for an hour and a half, and what I saw scared me. Around each of the **KI** machines there was never less than 10 people. Not a single person played **VF2**. This was the single most disgusting video game event I have ever seen (although *Cybermania '94* comes close).

Shane Shaffer
atariman@athena.mit.edu

Well, come on, Atariman, don't hold back. What do you really think about today's video

games? But seriously, besides the mental deficiencies you mention, why do you suppose players are feeding extra quarters into the graphics-rich, game play-poor coin-ops instead of the games that sport the opposite attributes? If whatever it is works, as it would appear to do, what incentive is there for manufacturers to push the other kind of game? So if you see a trend working here, what are you, as an up-and-coming game designer, going to do about it?

As to Kent's take on **Tempest 2000** ... it's his privilege not to like a game. That's why *EG* offers that *Final Grade* recap, to acknowledge a diversity of opinion that may also be reflected in our readership. We don't slap anybody here—unless they dither around about expressing an opinion, just to wake them up.

By the way, congratulations—you're our *STD* controller winner this month.

Obsolescence and Obscenity

In your response to my letter (*Hotline*, January *EG*), you ask me, "You like instant obsolescence?" My first reaction is to ask how you got that out of my letter, but I'm also tempted to give an offhand, "Yeah, it's

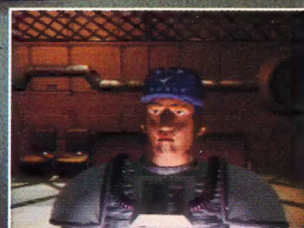
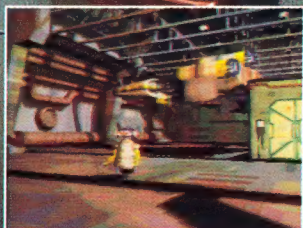
Letter Contest

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 consoles and computers.

ALIEN VIRUS

They're Unseen, Unheard, Unknown And Unfed.

As you set down on the docking 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 clues, like the shredded remains of some poor souls, may not be very easy to digest. In the meantime, an unimaginable terror stalks the few colleagues that you have left aboard Station Zeus.



cool." Let's just say that I have absolutely no faith that a standard will keep a platform from becoming obsolete, or being obsolete on release, as is most hardware. To keep a standardized system up to date with state of the art will still require expense, either in add-ons or [upgrading] to the next standard.

On the second point, it's obsolescence that makes a collectible product, and being a collector, I find great charm in obsolescence. Of course, that's only one facet of collectibility!

To counter my HDTV example, you state: "The expense of switching to a non-compatible HDTV system would make too many potential purchasers balk for it to be economically viable for any manufacturer or broadcaster to support." I think HDTV will be phased in gradually, so while many people will balk, the few buyers will watch the few broadcasters (or more likely, cablers) until the costs gradually fall and purchases gradually rise. Your argument is similar to ones posed in gaming; it forgets how many people purchase a new system without giving up their older one. The old NTSC system will still be around and kicking for years while HDTV's viability increases. There is no need to make HDTV compatible with NTSC if NTSC is still around—just keep your old sets!

Does the AP article (*Cyberwatch*) about Robert & Carleen Thomas's sentencing scare you? Where will they draw the line? What if you're actively rooting through my BBS and find something you consider obscene—suddenly I'm a felon for your work and discovery? Would you plant these images in my BBS to get me in trouble? Ouch; I hope this doesn't set a precedent.... and I'd like to know exactly how that postal inspector got the alleged obscenities; last I knew entrapment was illegal, and considering the implications of being able to charge someone with a crime that's not illegal where they are (and make them pay for their travel to your court venue no less), I'm a little scared.

Russ Perry Jr., Omro WI
perryda@sol.acs.uwosh.edu
("Russ" in subject)

It's hard to equate a thousands-plus HDTV system with an under-\$200 game system, and look at the trouble the over-\$400 game systems are having, getting accepted. Yes, there are those who have one or more anyway, but the number of people who are going to set up two primary television sets in their living rooms—one just for the occasional special broadcast—is probably too few to justify dropping prices on such systems at any speed. It's possible that a unit which could handle both, and automatically switch on detection of the appropriate signals, could make a go of it in the very high-end market. But to popularize it sufficiently to justify the manufacturers' and broadcasters' investment in the new standard, the price of such a combined system



would still have to be brought way, way down to an acceptable level.

You may need to research the definition of entrapment, Russ, but the Feds do have jurisdiction over interstate sales of pretty much anything. An opposite point was made in the CompuServe vs. Patterson case in which a federal court upheld a Texas resident's motion to dismiss an Ohio suit for lack of jurisdiction. But which case will set the national precedent remains to be seen. Yes, there is a certain sense of Big Brother starting to lurk on the Internet, and your concerns about planted evidence are disconcerting to say the least.

The Silver & the Gold

I agreed 100 percent with Mark Androvitch's letter (*Feedback*, March EG). Since I'm only 22 and fondly remember the oldies, I wonder how old some of these other magazine editors are? 15? Weird, maybe these big publishers hang around arcades looking for **Killer Instinct** freaks as potential editors?

It seems strange to see how much gaming has changed in 10 years. Ralph Barbagallo's letter was interesting but he didn't seem to understand the changes. Today's ultra-sleek 32-Bit systems can actually create virtual movies, not like those great old systems of yesteryear, which didn't even have enough memory to make a decent picture of ET appear onscreen. (I'm not getting into that game, though I hear the makers of **Shaq-Fu** bought the adjoining game mausoleum in Arizona...) To contrast the Hollywood invasion circa 1983 with today's influx of entertainment industry sharks, compare Fox's

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2600 **Alien** game, a generic **Pac Man** clone, with the Jaguar game **Alien vs. Predator**—it isn't necessarily a bad thing. (Imagine *Beverly Hills 90210* cutie Jennie Garth and Bruce Willis interacting with Diddy and Donkey Kong in SGI Splendor in **Donkey Kong Country 2!** That would be *cool!*)

The best parts of the issue were the reports on the CES and the cover article on the collapse of the 16-Bit market. From my experience, gamers are well aware that these systems have a short shelf life; many gamers I know will only buy a few 16-Bit games between now and this fall. With the shortage of quality titles, evidenced strongly by the lack of significant new games shown at the CES, the next six months will be harsh for retailers. Many will save their money until fall until the expert systems arrive. I predict this summer will see tons of cheap games. Collectors (i.e., bottom feeders) like me will be happy while the normal gamers (i.e., 'It's old, throw it out') and the industry wait.

Mike Palisano
Norwalk, CT

*Hmm, another snipe at **Killer Instinct**. Who are those guys gathered around the coin-ops?*

There's a lot of truth in your remarks about the upcoming market, Mike, but as you'll see in our cover story this month, there are a lot of excellent (though perhaps not revolutionary) titles scheduled for release in the next few months. As Russ Perry points out, buyers of new game systems need not throw the old ones out!

Thanks, all who wrote (e-mail or snail). Join us, all you good readers—we're having fun here! Write to:

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

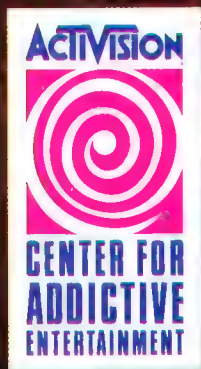


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HOTLINE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Compiled by Joyce Worley
& Ross Chamberlain

A Response to Piracy

Nintendo Sues Samsung Over Game Piracy Scandal

On Jan. 18, 1995, Nintendo executives announced that they had filed suit against Korean-based memory chip manufacturer Samsung Electronics for its role in the production of hundreds of thousands of counterfeit **Donkey Kong Country** cartridges. In the suit, Nintendo accused Samsung of knowingly supplying ROM chips containing Nintendo software to "at least two major government

owned and operated piracy operations."

"This is not the first incident in which Samsung has been involved," says Nintendo corporate general counsel Lynn Hvalsoe. "We first approached Samsung about piracy 18 months ago, but we found the scope of the

problem was increasing rather than decreasing."

As one of the world's largest manufacturers of memory chips, Samsung has long provided Nintendo and other game manufacturers with custom chips for game cartridges. These chips work like computer disks, storing program information that

entertainment consoles read and relay for game play.

Counterfeit copies of **Donkey Kong Country** containing 32 Mb chips manufactured by Samsung were brought to light during the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in January, 1995. According to Nintendo, detailed laboratory analysis of the cartridges proved the illegal production had been "initiated" by the Korean chip manufacturer.

"Finding counterfeit copies of **Donkey Kong Country** was the last straw," says Hvalsoe. "We have had no contact with Samsung since announcing this suit."

Nintendo is asking the courts to impose the immediate termination of unauthorized cartridges and products, seizure of all inventories of counterfeit Nintendo products and that the court require Samsung to release full information on the network that is marketing the pirated products and the extent of its distribution. They also asked the court to require Samsung to compensate Nintendo for monetary damage and other relief, and require more careful regulation of future production.

For their part, Samsung executives maintain that their company cannot be held responsible for the way customers use their products.



In a published response to the suit, Samsung Semiconductor Vice President of Sales and Marketing Keith McDonald states, "Nintendo's action is the equivalent of suing a diskette or computer vendor because you found pirated software on one of their disks."



The authorized cartridge on the left, and the unauthorized on the right.

According to Samsung officials, "Custom Mask ROM products are unique to each customer because each chip contains the customer's individual proprietary software. It is both completely impractical and inappropriate to expect a Mask ROM vendor to seek access to each customer's system architecture to analyze the function of the chip within that customer's system."

Hvalsoe says that the chips used in the counterfeit **Donkey Kong Country** cartridges were customized 32 Mb chips that have limited use other than Nintendo cartridges.

Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America, estimates that worldwide intellectual piracy costs his company between \$2.5 and \$3 billion each year. While this piracy occurs more frequently in Latin America and Asia, counterfeit Nintendo products can be found in all markets, including the United States.

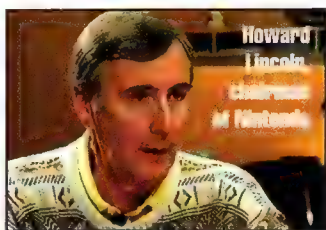
In a statement published the day that Nintendo announced the suit, Samsung expressed dismay at Nintendo's claims. "Samsung has for some time aggressively sought to identify and disengage from any customers engaged in illegitimate business practices. In fact, after Nintendo originally approached Samsung regarding suspected misuse of their ROM, Samsung investigated and did terminate their business relationship with a customer as a result of the investigation."

Samsung's statement denies that the company had any specific knowledge about the counterfeiting activities of its customers and reaffirms Samsung's stand against any misuse of intellectual property.

"Samsung has a history of fighting piracy," says Samsung spokesman John Satterfield. "We have discussed a number of solutions with Nintendo, including screening software." Sega of America, another Samsung customer, has provided the company with software for screening ROM

chips for Sega codes. According to Satterfield, this arrangement, which enables Samsung to protect Sega's intellectual property, has worked very successfully.

According to a second Samsung release, dated Jan. 19, 1995, Samsung offered Nintendo the same screening arrangement. "While Nintendo of Japan was cooperative, Nintendo of America objected. It asked Samsung to shut down production of 32 Mb ROMs for all customers and provide Nintendo all customers' confidential codes for all applications."



According to Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo manager of corporate communications, Nintendo of America accepted Samsung's offer to use screening software as long as an independent third party was brought in to do the screening. Kaplan says the Korean chip manufacturer found the suggestion unacceptable.

Samsung filed a countersuit against Nintendo, claiming that Nintendo defamed the company in its accusations. Samsung also seeks an unspecified amount of damages and an injunction.

(Steve Kent)

THE SEAT OF DOOM

ThunderSeat has a chair just for Doom players. The M-75 BattleSeat is targeted specifically to *Wolfenstein*, *Spear of Destiny*, *Doom*, *Doom II*, *Corridor*, *Dark Forces*, *CyClones*, *Descent*, *Creature Shock*, *The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki* and *Virtuose*. The chair senses subtle body movements at the shoulders, hips and legs and converts these muscle flexures to electrical signals. The signals become motion commands acceptable by the game. These instinctive, subconscious reactions to on-screen activity, create much faster responses. The BattleSeat also has a built-in sub-woofer, so sounds seem to be injected into the player's body. With all attachments, it's \$399, but a scaled-down model sells for \$269.

The Los Angeles company also has The ThunderSeat Ace multimedia chair, originally designed for military use, that heightens the experience of flight, tank and auto simulations.



The BattleSeat converts body motions into control inputs the computer can read.

CONTROLLING PAYBACK

Sony New Technologies and Interfilm Inc. worked together on the movie *Mr. Payback*. The interactive movie was shot on film then transferred to laser disc for interactive programming.

The movie was released Feb. 17 to theaters equipped with three-button pistol grip controllers for each seat. As *Payback*, the film's hero, fights injustice, theater attendees choose which bad guys to stop and how to deal with them. On-screen instructions tell the viewers when to vote, then tabulate scores on screen. There are hundreds of variations and 22 different endings.



Bob Gale directs Billy Warlock in the interactive movie *Mr. Payback*.

GRAPHIC COS TO MERGE

Three leaders in computer graphics agreed to merge, in arrangements that will enable a new subsidiary company that hopes to define new standards for visual realism in entertainment.

Silicon Graphics, Wavefront Technologies and Alias Research will combine into a wholly owned subsidiary company, focusing on development of graphic tools for the digital entertainment and creative design market.

Edward McCracken, CEO of Silicon Graphics, explained the reasons for the merger: "Leading-edge products from Alias and Wavefront are unique and immensely valuable. Embracing these assets will enable us to design the power tools that artists and innovators need to create the digital studio of the 21st century."

Rob Burgess, CEO of Alias, expressed his enthusiasm: "Entertainment and creative design users will see amazing things happen to the software they're using."

The CEO of Wavefront, Mike Noling, explained: "...collectively we will create products... that articulate a powerful, exciting future for customers."

The agreements involved transfers of stock, and the total value of the deal was estimated at about \$500 million.

DID YOU KNOW...?

WizardWorks has a 900-level, add-on game pack for Doom and Doom II. The New Jersey teen sued by Microsoft and Novell for distributing copies of their software over The Deadbeat Bulletin Board, must pay \$25,000. He also had to forfeit his computer equipment.... There are now over 25 million CD-ROMs installed worldwide, according to a report from InfoTech.... Donkey Kong Country, the TV Show, is now in development.... Sega named Star Wars Rebel Assault (JVC) as the Sega CD Product of the Year; it also received an award for Best Sound and Music.... If you call 1-800-292-4545, Digital Pictures will send a 20-minute video describing the making of their games, and a \$5 rebate coupon.... ProLine has a line of transparent colored storage cases, for gamers to organize CDs by types.... Hammerhead is putting sets of photographs on CD, to be used in print projects, or just as attractive slide shows. There are 100 pix on each disk, for \$9.95.... Fuji sponsored the End Zone Celebration in Florida during Super Bowl Week. This was part of an interactive exhibit called The NFL Experience, where visitors saw displays of football history. Fuji's booth let them make videotapes of winning touchdowns with their own faces superimposed over game footage.... Viacom is working with Sundance Children's Theatre, to launch a series of CDs for kids that provide a theatrical experience.... CompUS is running a Warcraft: Orcs and Humans tournament in their store in Austin, TX. Games are via modem, direct link or network, but the finals will be at the Austin store.... IBM recalled the power adapters used on 150,000 portable ThinkPad computers. The company discovered they cause electrical shock under some conditions. Call 800-238-1967 for model numbers affected, and for free replacements.



BARGAINING BLOCK

BIZ-DEALS

Domark will create titles for 3DO; first will be the flight-sim game **Flying Nightmares**, followed by **Absolute Zero**, a sci-fi simulator.... IBM and Philips are in a joint venture to produce semiconductors in Germany.... Goldstar USA changed its name to LG Electronics USA, and will make 3DO software. There should be 12-15 titles this year... Riedel Software agreed to make **Zootopia** for Philips' CD-i.... Capital Cities/ABC formed a joint venture with Electronic Arts, to do educational, reference and children's video game and computer programs.... There's a major push for a new dollar coin in Congress, spearheaded by the Amusement & Music Operators Assn.... The price of computer memory bounced 10-15 percent, a temporary hike brought about by the earthquake in Japan.... Konami's bringing in the big guns: The new prez of the U.S. Division is Ken Dimberger, a former Defense Department officer.... STD Entertainment will develop peripherals for the Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation. The company also expects to do controllers for Nintendo's Ultra 64.... T*HQ picked up a ninth EA Sports title; they just added **PGA Tour Golf III** for SNES, Game Boy and Game Gear to their line.... Suburban Cable (which services Philadelphia) is adding the Sega Channel in March.... EA acquired equity in Visual Concepts Entertainment (developers of SNES titles like **John Madden Football '94 & '95, NHL Hockey '95, Desert Strike, Clay Fighter**, etc.) Visual will work on 32-Bit platforms exclusively for Electronic Arts.... Trimark has the rights to publish **Faery Tale Adventure, Part II: Halls of the Dead**. The Dreamers Guild (the **Faery Tale** developers) expect it to be ready early in 1996.... Byron Preiss Multimedia Co. signed a non-binding letter of intent to sell about 20 percent equity to another (unnamed) publishing company.... T*HQ will publish LucasArts' **Super Return of the Jedi** for the Game Boy and Game Gear.

EDU-DEALS

The Library of Congress chose World Library to be a part of their American Memory Project. World Library will publish all the texts, illustrations and other material from 192 books in a CD **California As I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900**.... Autodesk is making their virtual-reality development software available to 50 colleges and universities. The grant is meant to promote development of VR applications in classrooms. The giveaway includes over \$100,000 in software.... The Boston Public Library is using the Bolt Beranek & Newman gateway system to link public schools to the library and to the resources of the Internet. This will include e-mail, news boards, file retrievers, and access to World Wide Web.... Unisys is cooperating with six science museums to form the Science Learning Network, a three-year project to hook elementary science teachers through the World Wide Web and create an on-line educational resource.... Hewlett-Packard made its largest-ever equipment donation, to University of California at Berkeley. The University will acquire almost \$8 million worth of HP computer products.... Random House has a line of special interest Net books, such as *NetTrek: Your Guide to Trek Life in Cyberspace*; *NetSports: Your Guide to the Sports Madness on the Information Highway*. There are also titles about net games, chat, money, and a guide to educate new users.... HighText Publications is starting a line of adult ed CD **Crash Courses**, each accompanied by a reference book. They plan mathematical, accounting, electronic, chemistry, physics and other science and engineering programs.... Apple is considering dropping **Who Built America** (Viacom) from their equipment bundles, because of customer complaints that the bundled history program has discussions of homosexuality, abortion and birth control included within it.

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INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT...

WILD BILL TAKES OFF AGAIN

You'd never guess Wild Bill Stealey used to be a "serious" computerist, working with VisiCalc. In the market for a new computer, he was looking at an Apple, when he saw Star Raiders on the Atari computer. "I still play it. I have my Atari up and running. I play games at least five nights a week."

Bill and his partner Sid Meier started MicroProse in Bill's basement with \$1500, and ended with \$50 million nine years later. "And we had some really great games; I played them all! If they weren't good enough for Major Bill, they didn't go out. Our biggest issue was when we decided to focus on military simulations. Those were the ones I loved, and being an ex-fighter pilot, those were the ones I could sell."

Bill, an Air Force Academy graduate, flew six years active duty, was a flight instructor for four years, flew the CSA Galaxy transport for five years and stayed in the Air National Guard for 10-12 years. And, he never quit flying. Now, the *Miss MicroProse* is owned by Interactive Magic. "She's the *Miss Magic* now," he joked.

About the MicroProse sale to Spectrum Holobyte: "It was not something I really wanted to do, but we were out raising money, and we had a couple of alternatives, when Gilman Louie said, 'Here's one I'd like you to consider.'"

"Gilman and I had been friends in the industry for a long time. I had saved Gilman's company two years before when he couldn't make payroll. I sent him \$400,000 on Christmas Day. So he turned around when I needed capital and his group came over and took over my company."

"Retirement was less than what I wanted to do but we needed the capital. MicroProse was a great company; it's still a great company; it's got great people and a tradition for fine games and that was the best way for it to continue. So I took my money and they took the company, and I went to Florida. But 47 is a little young to be retired. Three people tried to sell me restaurants, but I don't know anything about restaurants. So I asked, 'What is it I know a lot about?' I spent almost 12 years of my adult life in the software business, so I could go into the restaurant business, I could go into the airplane business or I could go into the software business."

So Wild Bill joined Interactive Magic. "I'm going to do what MicroProse did in the early days, when I was having more fun than when I was out giving chairman speeches."

"We're going to do simulations and strategy games—the two kinds of games I'm really good at. We're going to come out with a rose. We're bringing out our first simulation, *Agache Ganship*, and our second, an F-16 game, in the fall, and we have two strategy games. We're already going 110 miles an hour."

"We're going to make great games; we're going to have fun; we're going to run around with our hair on fire!"



MORTAL KOMBAT GOES ON TOUR

Mortal Kombat: The Live Tour starts this summer and will visit major arenas across the country. The show pairs martial arts with special effects, illusions and lasers.

Show sponsors are studying possibilities of allowing audiences to influence events, by providing them with controllers to choose how on-stage fighters will proceed.

NET NEWS

NTN Communications will provide interactive sports and trivia games to America OnLine. **QB1** (played in many bars) is the first, but NTN plans boxing, hockey and trivia games.... Sony Corp. of America started Sony On-line, combining the entire Sony family. It's on World Wide Web, with info and demos of Sony Imagesoft and Psygnosis games, as well as all other Sony products.... Vince Salvi (Pittsburgh, PA) won The Great

Earthworm Jim Race, by being the first person to reach the hidden room in a one-day on-line contest on the Sega Channel. His playing time was under 40 minutes.... Sports Illustrated TV premiered their NBC swimsuit special on the Internet.... *Star Trek: Voyager* is on the World Wide Web, with footage and soundbites presented in a game-like experience that turns the user into a crew member assigned to find information.... Jerry Glanville, former NFL coach, was on-line during Super Bowl to compete with fans to predict plays.... American Express launched ExpressNet on America OnLine, to provide account info and travel services to cardholding AOL members.... Customers can order new software on Internet, through software.net.... The WELL opened WebExpress, a self-publishing service so WELL members can put content on the Internet.... American Recordings purchased Web Wide World of Music, and will update it with new features.... The Hearst Corp. started The Multimedia Newsstand, a shopping and entertainment service, on Internet's World

Wide Web.... MCI Foundation made a \$20,000 grant to Colorado Spring's Pikes Peak Library District, as part of its "Library Link" venture with the American Library Association. This makes eight cities working with MCI to put information and references on-line.... Pro CD, publisher of phone directories on CD, will put its database on the Internet.

SPORTS ASSOCIATES, INC. ACQUIRES APBA

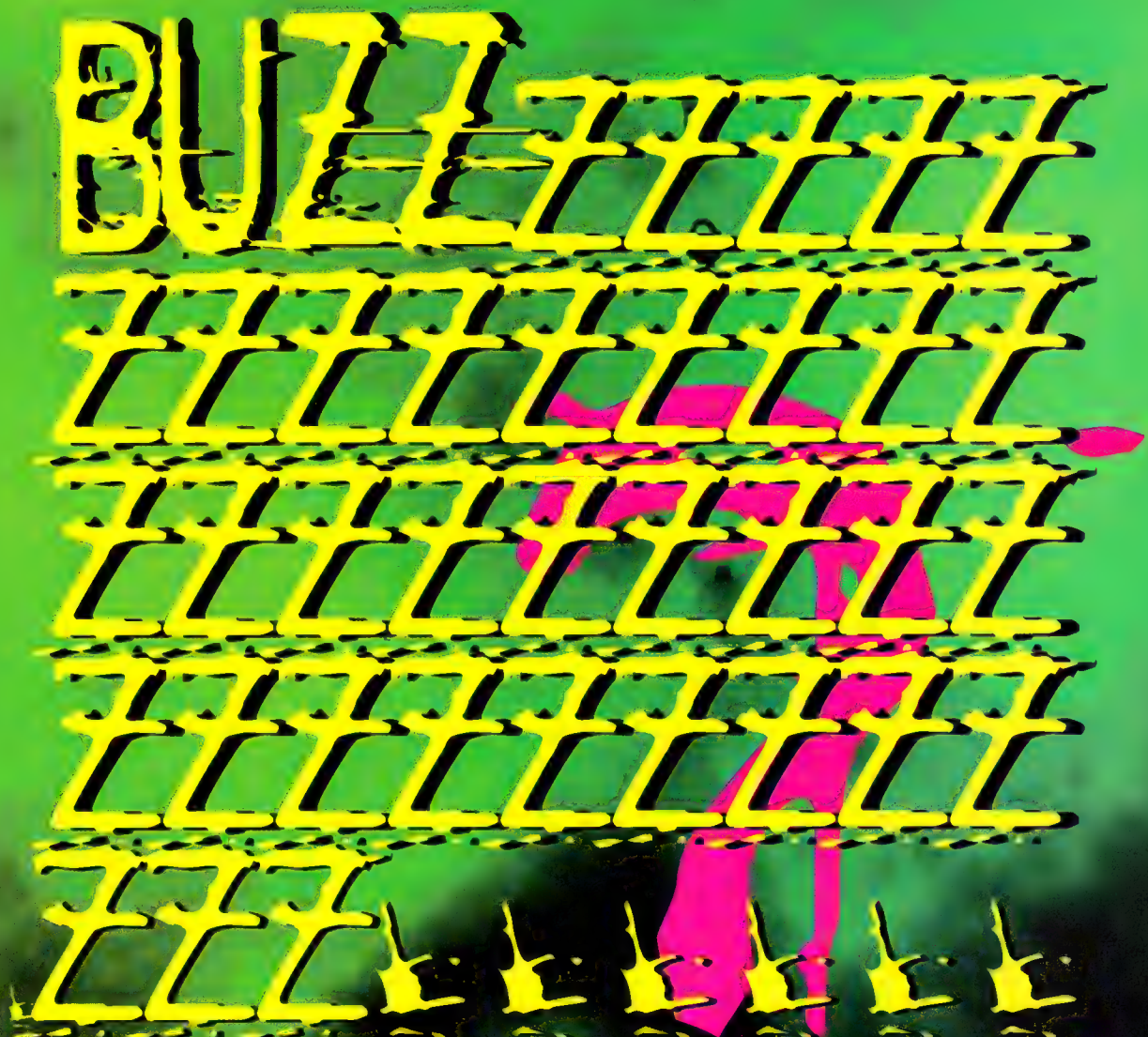
Sports Associates, Inc. completed the acquisition of APBA Game Company (the statistical sports game company from Lancaster, PA) and revealed that their first joint effort will be a new baseball game, **Sports Illustrated Presents MicroLeague Baseball '95**.

Fritz Light, owner and president of APBA, will become president of the APBA division of SAI. Mr. Light promised: "This acquisition will bring the well-loved APBA board and PC games to more fans through new retail, on-line and direct marketing venues." SAI is the parent company of MicroLeague.

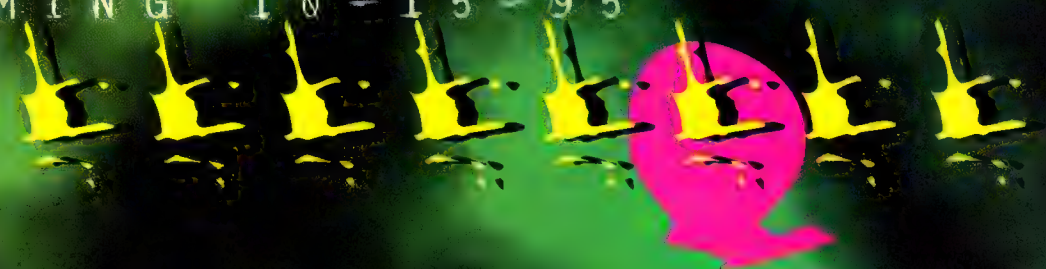
200,000 CAUGHT IN PRODIGY'S WEB

Almost 200,000 people signed onto the World Wide Web in the first three weeks after Prodigy introduced its Web Browser, and up to 15,000 additional users are going on each day. Users sign on to Prodigy, then use the Web Browser for access to the World Wide Web, using click-and-point commands. It also provides on-line tutorials and help features. Use of the Web Browser is included in Prodigy's \$2.95 per hour rate.

Prodigy also introduced the latest in research aids: Infonautics plain-language search tool, **Homework Helper**. Users type in their questions, and **HH** searches databanks such as Simon & Schuster, Gannett, Reuters, World Almanac, Compton's NewMedia and others. Prodigy users can subscribe for \$9.95 plus the \$2.95 hourly rate.



COMING 10-15-95



THE HIVE™

STAR TREK BEAMS TO LAS VEGAS

Paramount Parks is collaborating with Hilton Hotels Corp. to create *Star Trek: The Experience* in the Las Vegas Hilton. The multi-million dollar installation will combine entertainments inside a futuristic environment.

Each visitor will assume the identity of a Starfleet or alien crew member, get beamed to the ship's bridge and then take part in an adventure.



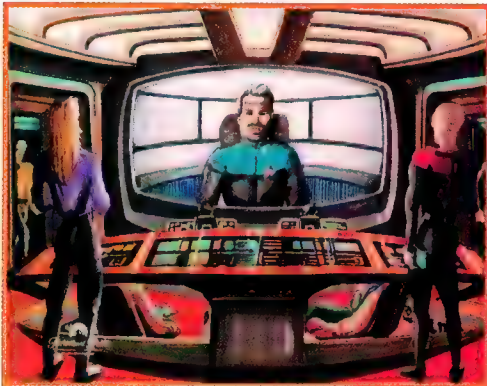
image projection will create a ride through the galaxy.

The 22-minute Voyage ends

on the *Deep Space Nine* promenade, which features interactive

computer technology and virtual-reality stations. The futuristic world will also include a restaurant housed in Cardassian architecture, and it wouldn't be complete without a souvenir shop.

Star Trek: The Experience is scheduled to open late in 1996, on the 30th anniversary of the classic television show.



Current plans are for a ship emergency to force the crew to flee to a shuttle craft. Inside each shuttle, viewer-perspective,

GAMES GRAB TRUEMOTION

TrueMotion S video compression technology, by The Duck Corporation, is attracting support throughout a large amount of the gaming and computing industries. It provides full-motion video without the need for any special boards or additional purchases by the end user. Crystal Dynamics used it in its popular games *The Horde* (3DO), *Star Control II* and *Off-World Interceptor*, and will utilize the new technology in the upcoming game *Gex*. Atlantic Records is using it for CD+. Gametek has it in *Quarantine*. ABC/EA Home Software licensed it for a Pentium version of *Sesame Street: Numbers*. Capcom has it in a number of future titles. Sega licensed it for Sega Saturn titles. Philips is using it with a new video capture board now in development. Magnet, Gametek, RevEntertainment, World Control, Hollywood At Home and Tribeca Interactive all have projects in the works using Duck's technique.

More companies will probably adopt the TrueMotion S technology this year, marking a step back from techniques that require personal computers equipped with special boards. It's usable on CD+, 3DO, Sega

Saturn, DOS, Windows (AVI, Quicktime), UNIX and Macintosh (Quicktime) platforms, making it a significant factor in upcoming interactive entertainments.

TOP CD-ROM GAMES—Jan. '95

This list, prepared by PC Data, is based on units sold in over 4,000 stores.

1. *Doom II*, GT Interactive
2. *Myst*, Broderbund
3. *5 Ft 10 Pack Vol. 2*, Sirius

Past the Pack and through the *Myst*, the now world-famous *Doom II* prevails.

TOP VIDEO GAMES—JAN. '95

This list of top video games is prepared by Software Etc., and is based on unit sales.

1. *Donkey Kong Country* (SNES) Nintendo
2. *Madden NFL '95* (Genesis) Electronic Arts
3. *NBA Live '95* (Genesis) Electronic Arts

It takes a pretty large ape to barrel over a football giant and a great basketball game.

ISLE OF THE GRAFFITI ARTISTS

One of 1993's most gruesome games was Merit

Software's *Isle of the Dead*. Hard as it may be to believe, this game out-gored *Doom* as it presented the comic-book-styled horror of a man trapped on an island of flesh-eating zombies.

Whether players voluntarily quit or are killed, leaving the island is not for the faint of heart. Quit the game, and a graphically detailed animation sequence depicts the player blowing his head off with a shotgun. Losing is no less grizzly—the zombies tear off the

hero's head and arms and begin eating them.

Despite its gruesome theme, Merit brought enough enthusiasm to *Isle of the Dead* to make it quite playable. Having enjoyed moderate success with American audiences, the company decided to export their product to foreign markets in Asia and Europe.

Some countries objected to the violence—most notably Germany, Australia and Korea. To accommodate these markets, Merit programmers had to turn blood scenes into slimy scenes by changing the color of the blood from red to green. They also removed the

shotgun and zombie sequences so that leaving the game is a little more civilized.

The strangest alterations were made for Singapore, a country that recently made global headlines for the caning of Michael Fay, an American student caught vandalizing cars. The first weapon in *Isle of the Dead* is a machete which players use to hack through tall grass, vines



and eventually even monsters. Singapore authorities objected to the use of the machete for such activities.

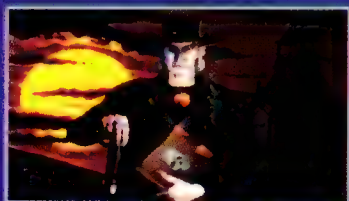
The solution, not surprisingly, was a bamboo cane.

(Steve Kent)

Silverload

Welcome To Silverload, A Devil Of A Town.

Folks don't come to Silverload much anymore. A'int been no silver here in years. And when they do come, they don't stay any longer than they have to. Missing persons? No, mister, a'int never seen no missing persons. Of course, folks here don't pay much attention to strangers. Have a look around? Can't say anybody will stop you from looking around, mister. Except the last man who came here looking for kin is buried over there on that hill.



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PC CD-ROM

Whispers from Cyberspace

11 Barrel—He's everywhere! He develops by night and writes the secret leads that others share and rerun. 11 puts his private eyes and postmodern spins into every corner of the Internet's interconnected world. 11 Barrel joins Anderson's headliner today, and he takes no prisoners! Now, in a hot-cyber-crimeing issue January Mystery Island magazine—11 Barrel!

Forget those raves about Adele's skulking in dunes. With *My Backs from Warner Music*, the software publisher is firing more people...

Who owns *Harpies II*? No one is talking, even off the record. That means legal action to establish ownership is inevitable...

TriMission, the Dark Company's software alternative to the hardware-based *Age of Empires*, is turning industry heads. More competitors are set to follow. Sega and 3DC...

SAE, the company formerly known as Prince Micro, joins Sports Association, has started APBA Game Co. The hobbying sports site that will be important in forthcoming games, especially hockey and football...

An old name is back to indicate network users. Beware of anyone asking for a password or credit card info on-line...

Katz Kunkel Works Inc., which just celebrated its 10 years in the field, has a new name. The firm set out in 1985 to make it Katz Kunkel Works. The name. The receptionist who has to say all that should be a raise.

STAR POWER

Jason (*Picket Fences*) Shankrow and Alice (*Designing Women*) Ghostly will do voice-overs for U.S. Gold's line of **IZZY** CDs.... The Planet



Eric Idle of Monty Python fame.

Reebok site on Internet has athletes on-line regularly. Recent participants include Nancy Kerrigan, Roger Clemens, Frank Thomas and Jimmy Connors.... Dana Gould, HBO comedian, will provide character impressions and one-liners to **Gex**, Crystal Dynamics' 3DO gecko lizard.... Schwarzenegger may take the lead role in *Doom: The Movie*.... Over 8,000 kids tuned in to real-life civil rights heroine Rosa Parks (who started it all by refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man). She made a rare appearance on the Scholastic Network, followed by Melba Beals (one of the nine students escorted into Little Rock School by Federal troops).... *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Melrose Place* will be CD programs; publisher Byron Preiss plans to include the

shows' stars in the trivia banks and episode guides.... **Psygnosis' Discworld**, based on Terry Pratchett's fantasy, has voices by comics Eric (*Monty Python*) Idle, Tony (*Black Adder's* Baldrick) Robinson and John (*Dr. Who*) Pertwee....

Stuart Culpepper (the judge from *In the Heat of the Night*) is the on-screen instructor in **Wings Over Europe** (Discovery). He also narrated Discovery's CD **Normandy: The Great**

Crusade.... Voyager is sponsoring Laurie Anderson's Nerve Bible Tour, her first multimedia performance in five years. At the same time, Voyager will release her first CD-ROM, **Puppet Motel**.

MICROSOFT-SONY IBN DEAL

Microsoft and Sony will cooperate to develop the hardware and software for interactive broadband networks (IBN). The two companies will develop continuous media servers and interactive home terminals, so that home users can receive on-demand audio and video, and navigate networks. The two companies also announced that they will explore new markets

with next-generation devices and services.

Technology evaluation will be done in Microsoft's lab, and Sony will work with network operators, equipment manufacturers and system integrators. Sony will provide training, technical information and will also participate in design and testing.

Microsoft's CEO Bill Gates explained: "When we sat down to discuss the areas where we had shared goals, it was clear that consumers worldwide could benefit from our cooperative innovations."

Norio Ohga, CEO of Sony Corporation, agreed: "We share the vision of an interactive future and look forward to cooperatively developing an architecture with unprecedented functionality."

Michael Schulhof, CEO of Sony of America, called it an "opportunity to provide content in an interactive future."

TOP COIN-OPS January 1995

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

Best Upright Videos

1. *Killer Instinct*, Midway
2. *Photo Play*, New Image Tech.
3. *Lethal Enforcers II: Gun Fighters*, Konami

Lethal play makes **Killer** #1.

Best Deluxe Videos

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

Daytona won the race for another month.

Best Coin-op Video Software

1. *Samurai Shodown II*, SNK
2. *Raiden DX*, Fabtek
3. *Gal's Panic 2*, Kaneko

Samurai punched and kicked its way to the #1 spot.

Best Pinball Machine

1. *Road Show*, Williams
2. *Shaq Attack*, Premier
3. *Star Trek*, Williams

Trekking through the stars and over **Shaq**, **Road Show** rolls to the top.

NEW LEAF FOCUS: GAMES

Although IBM and Blockbuster seem to be backing away from the idea of electronic distribution of music CDs, the system will be revamped for distribution of video games and CD-ROM titles.

In 1993, IBM and Blockbuster formed a joint venture, New Leaf Entertainment, to start an electronic distribution system that would let retailers code CDs on demand, at the store level. However, most record companies objected, citing piracy problems.

The two companies formed a new joint venture, Fairway Technology, to develop the hardware for the New Leaf system to encode video game carts and CD games. The system is currently being tested in 10 Blockbuster stores in Columbia, SC, with cooperation from Sega. Customers choose from titles previewed in a kiosk, then get their game a few minutes later on a cart that can be returned for reprogramming.

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



cunning traps and clever puzzles, plus amazing visual effects. Bolts of lightning and awesome displays of magic will make it all the more frightening.

It's easy to learn and intuitive to play. No wonder it's the game everyone is talking about.

Dungeon Master II. The ultimate quest of dungeons, magic and monsters.

Interplay

BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.

CYBERSTOCK WATCH

After rising steadily since June 1994, the Electronic Games Stock Index dipped 6 percent in January, 1995. As investors took profits and seasonal factors impacted stock prices, both cartridge and PC-oriented stocks dropped (5 percent and 6 percent respectively),

while the retail index actually rose 10 percent in the month. Share prices during the month were influenced also by the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Among individual stocks, the standout winner was Activision, up 35 percent on opinion

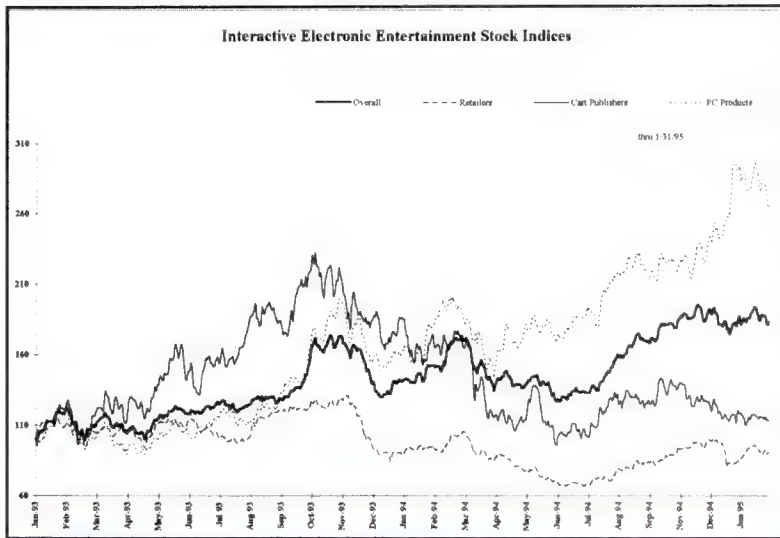
upgrades from a couple of brokerage firms and the announcement of a stock buy-back program. Alias research rose 17 percent during the month (on strong results) and CompUSA jumped 22 percent on strong reported same-store sales numbers for December. 3DO was up 10 percent due to a strong company showing at Winter CES.

Stocks losing ground outnumbered gainers by a two-to-one ratio. The biggest decline came from T*HQ, down 34 percent on concerns about product strength and management changes announced during the month. Davidson Associates was off 15 percent on profit taking and general concerns about PC software momentum in the spring quarter. Spectrum HoLoByte dropped 19 percent, reflecting concern about December

results and the delayed shipping schedule for **Star Trek: The Next Generation** on PC CD-ROM.

Several upcoming events are likely to attract investor attention during the next couple of months. One major date is Feb. 23, the scheduled street date for **NBA Jam Tournament Edition**. This is likely to be the most visible title in the cartridge business for the next six months. Other key titles to watch for include **Road Rash 3** and **The 11th Hour** in March. The new arcade game **Mortal Kombat III** should be available by late spring, providing clues about the strength of that title for the fall. Finally, on a general note, investors will begin to place bets on the likely leaders and followers on the new game platforms to be released in the second half of 1995. Stay tuned!

John Taylor is an interactive entertainment industry analyst with Portland, OR-based Arcadia Investment Corporation.



Industry Spotlight:

MAKING THE MUSIC THAT MAKES THE GAMES

H. Kingsley Thurber is a refreshingly eccentric musician who has seen the world from Alaska's frozen turf to Costa Rica's balmy shores. He's worked with one of the best-known musicians in the world and, like most of the music men in the video game field, he is all but unknown by many game fans.

Thurber's work isn't exactly hard to find—it can be heard on everything from Acclaim's *Virtual Bart* and *Electro Brain's Dirt Trax* to the entire series of *WWF* wrestling games, with *Looney Tunes B-Ball* scheduled for release by Sunsoft.

As with most of electronic musicians, Thurber found the road to scoring video games to be long and winding, and not at all where he expected to wind up. He started out like a million other garage band guitarists, learning to play the electronic instrument at the age of 13—but then, there isn't a whole lot else to do when you live in Alaska. He quickly found his interest drawn to the technical side of things—engineering, working with amplifiers, etc.—and worked for years handling the responsibilities of the live sound for performing rock bands. After several years, he even managed to build his own studio.

"You build your own studio," he recalls, "and you think, 'Great, I'm going to get to write music!'" But instead, he

found himself forced to take a constant stream of commercial jobs. "Pretty soon I wasn't really writing anything of my own at all."

That all changed, however, when his musical and spiritual destinies commingled, summoning him from the frigid northlands to the sunny island of Costa Rica, where he would spend several years working with Jim Seals of the famous duet Seals & Croft ("Summer Breeze"). Seals and Thurber, both of whom are members of the Baha'i faith, co-wrote some songs together, and the bug for writing music once again bit Kingsley, who was forced to return to Utah to care for his elderly mother.

Back in Utah, he met someone with connections in game development who asked the thousand-dollar question: "Do you think you could write music for games?"

"It wasn't too difficult," he reported.

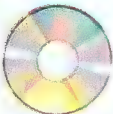
When we likened it to scoring a film, he observed: "In movies, you're more concerned with shifting moods and moves. With video games, once [the player has] reached a certain level, you have to reinforce the sense of movement and momentum."

Kingsley's most recent release is *WWF Raw* (LJN), and he's working on "some of the most intricate music I've ever written," but, "I can't talk about it yet, unfortunately."



SuperKarts

To make it more realistic, we'd have to kick dust in your face!



On CD-ROM and 3.5" disks for IBM PC & Compatibles.

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■ **REVOLUTIONARY RT3D ENGINE**, so high-tech, it generates fully-textured 3D graphics **in real time** — even on a 386 PC!

■ **SMOOTH-AS-SILK ANIMATION** that can go as high as 60 frames a second — rivaling the hottest coin-op hits!

■ **16 HEART-STOPPING TRACKS** in different cities around the world. Each track features hidden shortcuts, power-ups, jumps, pitlanes, oil slicks — and its own awesome music soundtrack*!

■ **MULTIPLE CAMERA PERSPECTIVES.**

Watch the action from practically any viewpoint by simply changing camera angles.

■ **FOR UP TO 8 PLAYERS ON LAN!**

You can play solo against intelligent computer-controlled drivers. Or against a friend using the simultaneous 2-player split screen. Best of all, get on an IPX-protocol

LAN for the ultimate race — with up to 8 players at the same time*!

Visit your local software dealer today, or call 1-800-346-2300.



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*CD version only.



THE BEAT BACK

Donkey Kong Country
Super NES Set
40 Banana Bucks

Super Game Boy
25 Banana Bucks

Donkey Kong
for Game Boy
10 Banana Bucks

Donkey Kong Country
15 Banana Bucks

Game Boy
20 Banana Bucks

With
Banana Bucks

Collect 'em when you buy
select Nintendo products!

Spend your Banana Bucks on bunches of cool stuff!

Here's an offer that's sure to ap-peel to your sense of greed. First, buy any (or all!) of the Nintendo products shown on the opposite page between March 21

and April 30. Then mail us your proofs-of-purchase and your Banana Bucks order form. We'll exchange your proofs for the cool stuff shown below.



DKC Jacket
Price: 45 Banana Bucks

DKC T-Shirt
Price: 18 Banana Bucks

Collectible Donkey Kong
Price: 9 Banana Bucks

Diddy Kong Cap
Price: 12 Banana Bucks

Donkey Kong Country Soundtrack CD
Price: 14 Banana Bucks

DKC Sweatshirt
Price: 28 Banana Bucks

Make your move FAST!

These items are authentic, top-quality, can't-get-it-in-the-stores stuff. To get yours, just follow the steps on this order form. Start grabbin' your Banana Bucks fast and cash'em in before May 31, 1995! See order form for details.

Play It Loud



Banana Bucks Order Form

Please fill out all information below, printing clearly. Orders must be postmarked by 5/31/95.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone (____) _____

I have earned _____ Banana Bucks. I have written in the UPC number for each item purchased and I am enclosing my cash no earlier than 3/21/95 and no later than 4/30/95. (Please circle the Nintendo items purchased on the receipts.)

Item	UPC (Last 6 Digits from Bar Code)	Qty.	What each is worth	Total Banana Bucks
Donkey Kong Country Super NES Set				
Super Game Boy		X 40	Banana Bucks=	
Game Boy		X 25	Banana Bucks=	
Donkey Kong Country		X 20	Banana Bucks=	
Donkey Kong for Game Boy		X 15	Banana Bucks=	
		X 10	Banana Bucks=	

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CYBERWATCH

Games Fall Down Go Boom

The high failure rate among last Christmas' software was the subject of features in both *Time* and *The Wall Street Journal*. "Returns will be a big deal for the first quarter," says Liz Buyer [an analyst at T. Rowe Price], who points out that most of the big software companies have set aside twice as much cash as they usually do to offset returns.

"...the Ippolitos [are] a Brooklyn family who were in line ... waiting to return a piece of software that wouldn't work. The family owns two, late-model computers, IBM clones, so that both Nick, 14, and Zachary, 11 ... have a machine...

"A few weeks ago, their father bought them **Front Page Sports Baseball '94**, by Sierra On-line. The game, which the boys opened Christmas Eve, couldn't be installed properly. Nick says he called Sierra's hot line 'for five hours, once every five minutes' and kept getting a busy signal. Finally, unable to determine whether the fault was in the program or in the computer, they returned the game...

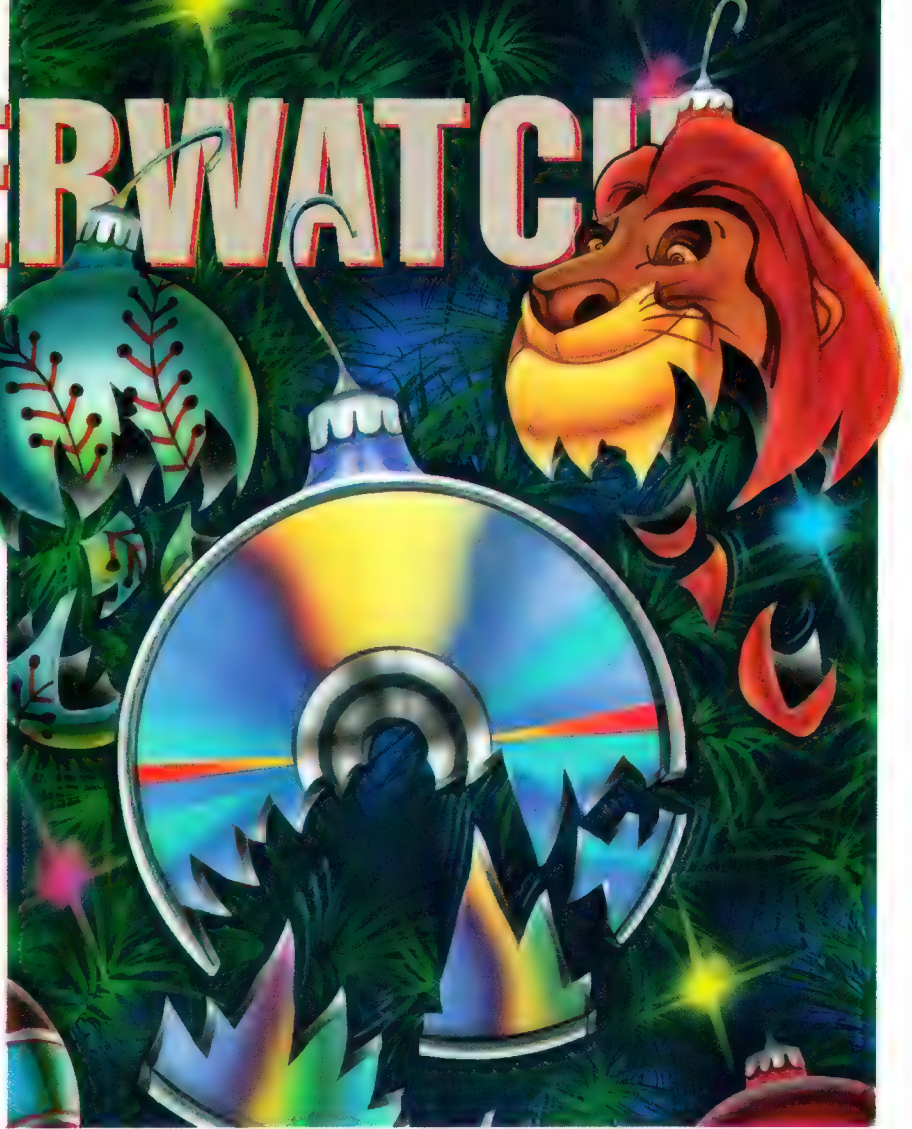
"...Microsoft ... is encouraging other computer firms to adopt a new "plug-and-play" standard that is supposed to minimize equipment and software conflicts."

—"Ho, Ho, Ho, CRASH!"
Time (1/9/95)

"Like thousands of other children who found Disney's **The Lion King** CD-ROM under the tree, [3-year-old Cailin Flaherty] was disappointed when her dad couldn't get the program to work on the family computer: Video would freeze midframe. Dad, a software specialist with a relatively powerful computer, wasn't too pleased, either, when Disney didn't respond to his repeated requests to fix the problem..."

—"A Jungle Out There"
The Wall Street Journal (1/23/95)

"More than half the problems that computer owners experience [from the 1/9/95 article] can be solved by knowing a handful of elementary computer concepts. Learning



a bit about a computer is certainly no more difficult than tackling high school Spanish. Average users would be amazed at how much control they can have if they spend an hour or so learning the DOS/Windows system. If they do not know how to input 'type config.sys,' they are going to waste a lot of time on the phone to tech support.

"The essential computer basics are not going to go away with software updates or anything else. Computers require a bit of work in order to master them and reap the rewards. Those who are not prepared to invest the time and make the effort should buy a Nintendo game instead."

—John Stewart, President,
Audio Computer Information
Time's letter column (1/30/95)

"Court spokeswoman Jerriane Hayslett said the court has been getting 30 to 40 calls daily recently from people complaining about the Sony and IBM logos [visible on Judge Ito's monitor and desk during the broadcasts of the O.J. Simpson trial].

"'We're not in the business of giving free advertising,' she said. 'The Judge just needs the equipment to get his job done ... We're exasperated.'"

—Associated Press (2/3/95)

"Williams/Bally-Midway has been providing sneak previews of **Mortal Kombat III** (sound and graphics) to players over the CompuServe network since late 1994.

"...Roger Sharpe ... said the coin-op **MKIII** was still under development at presstime, but it could possibly ship to the trade before May. No firm home release date has been set, Roger said, but he confirmed **MKIII** would probably be part of the '95 Christmas home game push. Roger denied reports that **MKIII** will be programmed differently for different regions of the country. He also scotched rumors that **MKIII** would contain 'crossover' characters from **Killer Instinct**, Midway's current hit."

—"Hot Off the Press," *RePlay* (2/95)

In the 1994 wrap-up issue of *Playthings*, the list of top 10 toys for the year, based on a survey of buyers representing "thousands of retail operations nationwide," rated the Sega Genesis game system at number four, right behind the Power Rangers, Barbie and Mattel's Lion King, but ahead of the SNES, which finished seventh, ignominiously behind Jennie Gymnast.

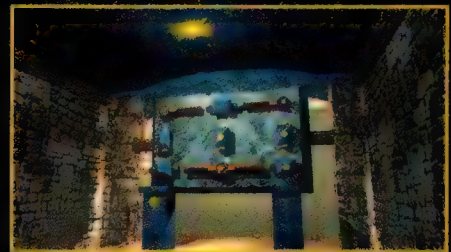
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Explore The Secrets Of An Ancient Civilization Lost In Time.

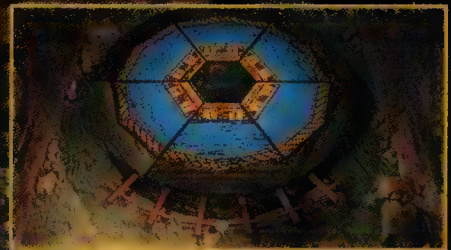
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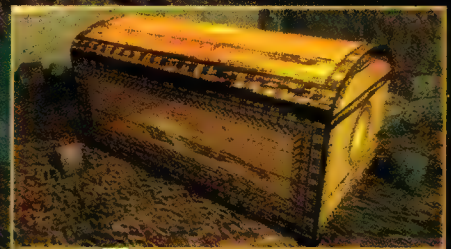
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VIRTUAL BOY

To Virtual Boy or Not to Virtual Boy? That is the Question!



by Steve Kent

According to Gunpei Yokoi, the man who invented both Virtual Boy and Game Boy, Virtual Boy was designed as an alternative to video games—an immersive world that players could explore.

To achieve a truly immersive experience, Yokoi housed Virtual Boy in large goggles



similar to those used for virtual reality. Unlike true virtual goggles, Virtual Boy goggles sit on a tabletop stand and don't use head-tracking. The goggles house sophisticated visual displays that create astonishing 3-D graphics using red LED technology.

Like Game Boy, Virtual Boy has single-color graphics. Lasers within the goggles

project crisp, red images against a black background. Though red-and-black graphics sound less than exciting, the high-resolution quality of these images rival those of any other game system.

While many have criticized Nintendo for not developing Virtual Boy as a color system, Nintendo can look back to the success they have had with the one-color Game Boy that has trounced no fewer than three major full-color competitors.

To ensure that all players have a three-dimensional experience, Yokoi's team developed two sets of precision focus controls. The first, an interocular control, sets the hyperbolic curvature of the display. Since

Virtual Boy projects individual images to each eye, the second control simply measures the space between the user's eyes.

Virtual Boy Games

Nintendo has not completed any game cartridges for Virtual Boy. The two games used to demonstrate the system, a pinball game and a boxing game, may never be offered as retail products.

The pinball game, titled **Space Pinball**, lets players select from five futuristic tables. All of these tables were created to highlight Virtual Boy's great 3-D effects. One table has four transparent vertical levels. Players see the puck (**Space Pinball** uses a puck instead of a ball) at various distances as it tumbles through tunnels and shoots between levels. The artificial physics governing the puck's movement are as realistic as the physics in any pinball simulation on the market.

The second game, **TeleRoBoxer**, is a nonsensical game in which players box robotic opponents. Though the game is silly, it shows Virtual Boy's ability to handle fast action without distortion or flicker. Earlier versions of this game featured simple graphics, but the latest version has fine details.

Too Many Choices?

The major obstacle that Nintendo will have to overcome may not be the single color graphics, or even the \$200 price point, which many consider high for a system with these kinds of limitations. It may in fact be the upcoming flood of "Next Generation" machines scheduled for release in the fall and winter of this year.

Saturn, PlayStation and Nintendo's own Ultra 64, will all be out there fighting for the precious holiday dollar. Add that to the existing Genesis, Sega CD, 32X, SNES and 3DO and you have a lot of systems vying for a finite amount of game dollars.

While the outcome of this upcoming system war is yet to be decided, many are declaring Virtual Boy the first casualty.

Nintendo hopes they're wrong.

"...the high-resolution images rival those of any other game system."





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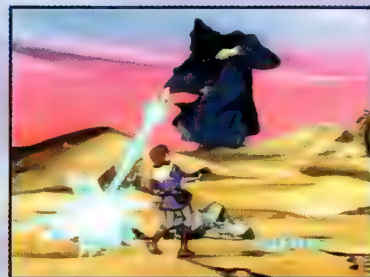
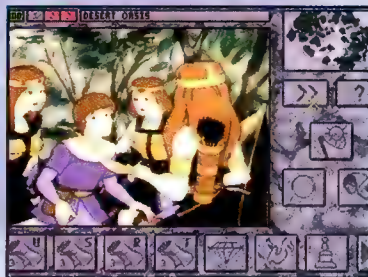
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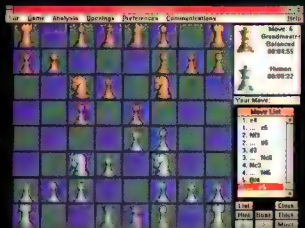


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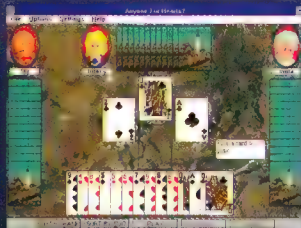
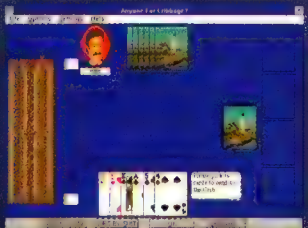


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- Choose from a wide variety of 2-D and 3-D boards and multiple perspectives.

• Don't trust the machine? Roll your own dice and key in your throw!

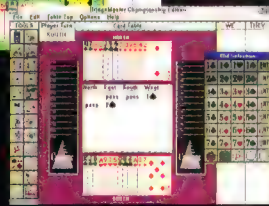
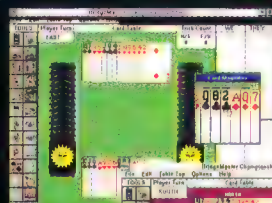


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GAME DOCTOR

Can these games be saved?

Rarely has the Doc been so overwhelmed by questions about a single product; *everybody* wants to know about the NakiTek GameSaver. Does it live up to the promises in the magazine ads? (“...stop in mid-game, then restart, even days later, at the same point! Marks your restart spot, even if the game is turned off for days. Play at half speed with no sound or picture distortion. Eliminates need to replay lower skill levels.”) Will it work on all our favorite games? Etc., etc., etc.

Well, for the over two dozen readers who demanded the story, the Doc and consultant Dr. Vance spent several days examining the capabilities of the system, and here's what we found:

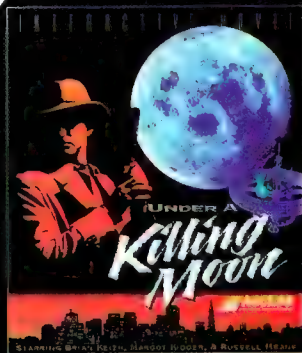


On all games from four to eight months old, the system worked exactly as advertised, however with occasional freezes and other glitches. It was great on **Zombies Ate My Neighbors** (Konami) and other games of that period, but worked like a wheel with a stick in the spokes on more recent entries. The newer the game—the game—**Donkey Kong Country**, **Uniracers**, **Punch-Out**, etc., etc., the

less likely the system was to perform.

We immediately contacted David Naghi of Naki and he was extremely helpful. He immediately sent out a new, improved version that worked more smoothly and on more recent games—but still couldn't crack the very latest releases. It even erased more than 600 races on a **Uniracers** vanity board in one ugly scene, and while it worked better with the games of two to four months earlier, we found more glitches on older games.

At Winter CES, I spoke to David who explained that the system is still “learning” how to adapt to new programming, and as a result, it will have some trouble for the next 6-12 months. So, as a patch solution, codes will be released for new



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.

games, through the magazines, phone lines and other information conduits.

Now, here's what they *don't* tell you:

- 1) The cart *must* remain in the SNES at all times, unless attached to a battery pack (see below).
- 2) The game can be removed from the system (to, say, play at a

friend's house), but only for several hours—or as long as the six AA batteries last.

3) The system only handles one game at a time. So if you're playing, **Final Fantasy III**, your machine is going to be locked up for quite a while.

4) The system seems to have difficulties dealing with games that have their own lithium battery backups (info lost, etc.).

This product is likely to suit a very special target audience—game breakers who want to work single-mindedly on one game until they've beaten it.

Q: Whenever anyone answers a question concerning "burn-in" to picture tubes, the answer is always, "You're okay as long as you don't leave the game on 'pause' for hours and hours." But you have to do just that for long games that don't have a battery or password. But you're safe if you turn the TV off, then you could leave the game paused for *days* even with no ill effects. Right? Right? Tell me I'm right, Doc!!

RIP Greensboro, NC

A: Yes, RIP, you're right. Testers do it all the time. Or you could check out the Naki system, of course.

Now, the man who pursues me through the

months, the man who asked about the origin of the 2600, the one, the only, James Catalano. Take it away, James:

Q: In the early days of video gaming, there was a company called Wico that made high-quality joysticks that were built like tanks. To attest to how well these sticks were made, my Wico bat-handle is still in use after the many years since it first came out. Whatever happened to Wico?

**James Catalano
Chicago, IL**

A: Can't get me this time, James. Nope. No mad investigations this time out, just a quick perusal through a few reference magazines. Wico started out in the coin-op business, building the heavy-duty controllers you used on many of your favorite coin-ops. When the video game market imploded in the mid-1980s, Wico returned to the arcades, where they remain a leading manufacturer of controllers.

Q: Hey! I'm writing to set you straight in regards to a couple things you said in your last EG. (Well, maybe it wasn't exactly in your column; if it wasn't, please forward this to the appropriate dept.)

Okay. There was some talk about the "first" games to use voice. I forget what you said exactly, but I recall you were very wrong. You mentioned **Sinistar**, which is *not* from the same era as the old classics. **Sinistar** is what, 1983? There were talking video games as far back as '79/'80!

Space Fury features a big, old alien head that dared you to play him (during Attract Mode). Ultravox had little people saying, "Help me!" when carried away by aliens. (That's where the "vox" part of the title came from.) **Berzerk** did have speech, as you mentioned, and it is definitely older.

**Rabies
(private e-mail address)**

A: No idea what you're referring to, Rab, but I loved it.

Remember to send those questions, comments and corrections to:

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

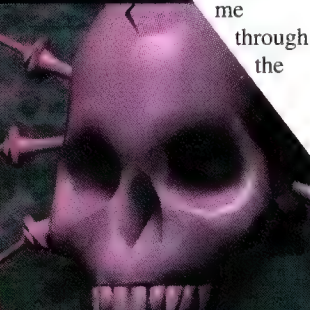
A: They all star in ACCESS Software's new CD thriller **Under a Killing Moon!**

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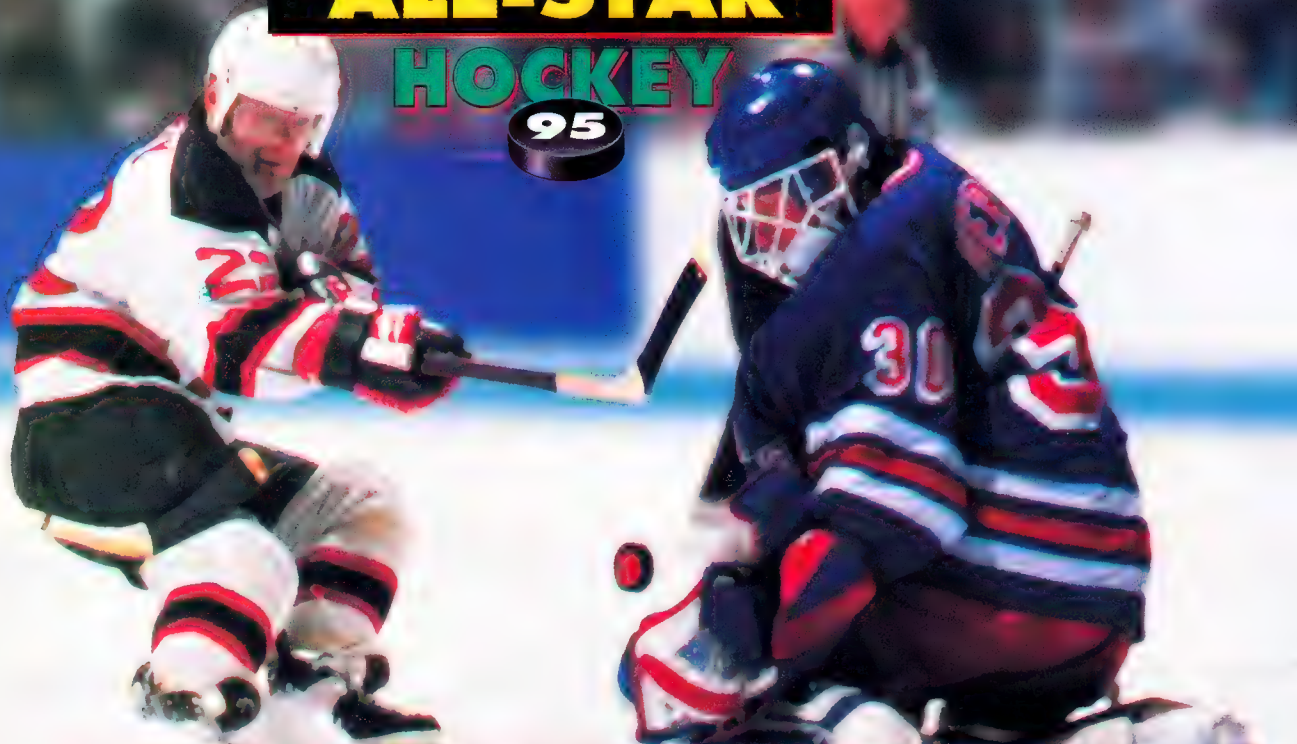


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SO REAL YOU'LL FORGET IT'S A GAME

1995 SPRING-SUMMER PREVIEW


By The
Editors of
Electronic Games

**These are the
hot, new games and
entertainment products
for the warm-
weather months.**

The spotlight shines on hardware during this transitional period, as consumers wonder which platforms will become forces, and which farces, in the next year.

Technology and corporate wheeler-dealing overshadowed software at last winter's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where market trends dominated more conversations than play-mechanics.

It's temporary. By next



month's E³, electronic publishers will put aside their fears and beat the drums for Christmas releases.

A lot of console and computer titles are caught in the middle, too late for the 1994 holiday season and too early for the 1995 edition. It would be easy to overlook them, but that would be a definite mistake. There aren't many breakthroughs in either technology or content, but there's a feast of A and B titles on the way to market

for the second and third quarters.

Three segments comprise EG's third annual Spring-Summer Gaming Preview. On these two pages, you'll find the entire editorial staff's consensus picks for the best electronic games slated for publication between March and September. Following that, each editor picks his or her favorite forthcoming product. Finally, a roundup of other notable computer and video games ties it all together.

The Must-Have Electronic Game for Spring and Summer

Daggerfall (Bethesda/PC-CD-ROM) is the much-anticipated sequel to 1994's **Arena**. The original game took the **Doom**-style action/adventure to the next plateau with much heightened command flexibility and solid role-playing elements. Although **Arena** won unstinting praise from many software critics, Bethesda had a little trouble bringing it to market. The succession of patches corrected most of the problems, but by that point, some gamers had lost patience.

Bethesda is determined to do it right this time. So far at least, they are on the success track with few obstacles in sight. If the publisher can properly finish off this first-person adventure, it is going to shake the hobby.

Not only is **Daggerfall** exceptionally entertaining and exciting, but it also opens a new chapter in development of the electronic adventure. It perfects the concepts of **Arena** to produce an game with the immediacy and involvement of **Doom** and the intricacy of traditional adventures like **King's Quest** and **World of Zeen**.

The Console-Picked Hit

PO'd (Any Channel/3DO) is the kind of irresistible disc that makes owners of other platforms jealous—and sells bunches of systems. That it comes from Any Channel, a new name on the growing software shelf, makes it doubly welcome.

id Software has **Doomed** the gaming world. The first-person action-adventure replaced the side-perspective street fighting contest as the most popular type of electronic game. And where the fighters appeal mostly to 12- to 15-year-olds, the **Doom** genre casts a much wider demographic net and is loved by adults as well as under-18s.

PO'd sets new standards for this category on the 3DO—and that's no small boast. The player's character is a Marine, but does his best work in the kitchen rather than on the battlefield. If the gamer doesn't find weapons quickly, the hero must attack foes with nothing more lethal than a frying pan!

Besides the usual running, stalking and walking, the character can don a jetpack and fly through multilevel mazes. This is the least constricted of any of the **Doom**-alikes, with lots of big locations and open-air situations.

The only criticism: The big graphics are slightly sludgy, but many users will enjoy the

less-than-perfect look. It's funky, scratchy and cool. It may get some clean-up before actual publication.

The three main designer/developers hung the name **PO'd** on it when 3DO stock had one of its more serious drops. But with sizzling software like this, the stock price could be a lot less worrisome in 1995.

The Computer-Picked Hit



Magic: The Gathering (Spectrum Holobyte/PC-CD-ROM) may well be the smartest licensing deal of the year. Certainly, it has been a long time since a non-electronic strategy game aroused a comparable level of enthusiasm among gamers.

Spectrum Holobyte had an early decision to keep the electronic edition as close as possible to the contest millions have been enjoying for the last couple of years. They've succeeded to such an extent that even the most finicky **Magic** player will find little cause for complaint.

A big part of the game will be modem play. The publisher realizes this, too, and the telecommunications module is easily up to the task. Expect this one to be the talk of the cyberspace as game enthusiasts happily retreat to the air-conditioned comfort of their computer rooms when the thermometer cranks out those disturbing triple-digit temperatures.

Our Editors Pick the Hits If our critics could only have one cart or disc, they'd choose these!

A Passion For Art (Corbis/Windows and Mac CD) In the 1920s, an art collection was accumulated by Dr. Albert C. Barnes and housed in the museum he built. But the Impressionist art was so controversial that the museum never opened. Paintings by Renoir, Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso and others

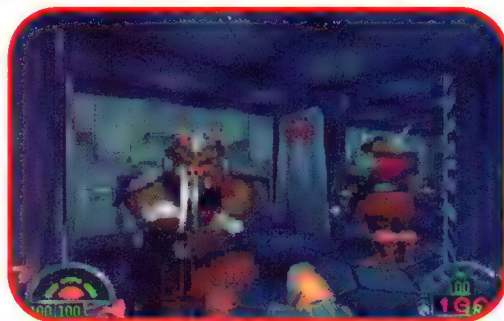


remained unseen, locked deep inside the Barnes Museum.

The software provides a virtual tour of the Barnes Museum, complete with commentary and history, and two levels of Zoom for viewing the paintings. A map of the gallery shows location, while time lines show other global and cultural events (including music) of the era. There are portfolios of each artist, biographies and documents that show how the paintings were obtained. (Joyce Worley)

Dark Forces (LucasArts/PC-CD) indicates the current software trend. This **Doom**-like was the most impressive new game at the Winter Consumer Electronic Show, and it is likely to be one of the best games rolled out in spring and summer this year.

The basic idea is irresistible: The player is a special agent for the Rebel Alliance assigned



to infiltrate an Imperial Star Destroyer and filch the plans for Darth Vader's dream machine, the Death Star. The game offers more than just the usual mindless shooting; there's a mystery to solve (what's the story on the new class of Imperial Troopers marching around the ship in their bad-assed black armor?), the plans to locate and of course, the glorious thrill of moving through the *Star Wars* universe, armed and extremely dangerous. (Bill Kunkel)

Full Throttle (LucasArts/PC CD-ROM) has undeniably slick visuals like the animé classic *Akira*. It manifests that same gritty, greasy undertone, but with a distinctly American flavor.

Ben, the leader of a biker gang, is framed for the murder of a prominent

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THE EARTH.**

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businessman who, as luck would have it, holds demigod status in the biker community as the manufacturer of the hog of choice.

Full Throttle employs an incredibly intuitive point-and-click interface that shows up everything Sierra has ever done and seamless, scrolling animations. The action is nonstop, and those with a quick hand on the mouse will feel as if they have stepped inside another world. (Ed Dille)

Hard Evidence (WordPerfect/PC-CD-ROM) shows that the most interesting games sometimes originate from the most unlikely sources. This interactive entertainment, from a publisher best known for its word processor, gives the computerist a chance to research Marilyn Monroe's death. All the evidence is here, and the participant must track it down, put it together and arrive at a hypothesis concerning the controversial demise of the blonde film goddess.

This is definitely *not* the best interactive entertainment product coming in the next five months, but it is surely one of the freshest concepts gamers will see this year. **Hard Evidence** has the potential for extended, engrossing play. (Arnie Katz)



What's My Story (Digital Pictures/Hybrid CD) is the second title from DP's new Digital Kids Division. It expands the concept of traditional write-your-own-story software by concentrating on the storytelling aspects. Children can create original sagas by sequencing selections containing over 600 FMV movie clips, dozens of characters and 100 musical compositions and sound clips. Children can also opt to listen to one of eight short stories narrated by storyteller Jill (sic) Wright.

An extra plus for parents: The stories can be set according to maturity level, not age level. This



adjustment allows parents to base guidelines on concentration spans and cognitive skills, which avoids the risk of youngsters becoming bored or frustrated.

More Picked Hits for Spring and Summer These console and computer games will be on the "Most Wanted" list.

Console Picks

Multimedia console titles just got a lot better. The improvement that began in fourth-quarter 1994 continues into the warm-weather months. Better game play is the big difference, though the growing mastery of sound and graphics is also apparent.

That doesn't mean that 16-Bit is finished. Hardware and software sales have slumped badly, except for the remarkable **DKC**, but that won't stop publishers from bringing out some major releases between now and early 1996. The real

heavies will not debut until 16-Bit's final holiday season, but gamers can expect some good ones in the next few months, too.

Action

Knuckles Chaotix (Sega/32X) will start Sonic in Japan but Knuckles takes center stage in the U.S. version, out in June. New characters in this 24-Meg cart include Vector Crocodile and

Mighty the Armadillo.

Comic Zone (Sega/Genesis), packing 24 Meg, is due in late spring. The interactive comic book features an on-screen hand that actually draws villains as the player encounters them. Player moves from panel to panel, with frequent, **SF2**-style fight sequences.

Fatal Fury—Special Edition (JVC/Sega CD) is hyped as a "near exact conversion."

The March release doesn't really seem all that special. It is mostly for fighting game diehards.

Fight For Life (Atari/Jaguar) allows gamers to create up to 28 million different fighter variations! When victorious, a

character assumes two of the victim's five abilities. The April introduction has a 360-degree axis, like **VFighter**, and gives the rotation a real work-out. This could be a big hit for the system.

FX Fighter (Nintendo/SNES), originally titled **Fighting Polygons**, is Nintendo's response to **Virtua Fighter**. It utilizes the Super FX2 chip to process 15K+ polygons per second according to sources. It appears promising, but unfortunately it was less than half-finished at press time.

Judge Dredd (Acclaim/SNES, Genesis) is based on the forthcoming Stallone movie and long-popular British comic. It has 12 levels,



eight of which came from the movie. The game and film will launch simultaneously, with a CD-ROM computer version to follow within a few months.

The Mask (T*HQ/SNES) is a fairly ordinary, side-scrolling platform game. Very few special effects and little morphing are in place, though it's hard to believe the publisher won't add a lot more frills.

Mortal Kombat II (Acclaim/32X) is touted as a coin-op clone. So far, it isn't. Still, it is the best home replica of **MK II** so far. Acclaim is loading it with lots of special secret features, including a **Pong** game. Backed by a hefty \$10 million ad campaign, **MK II** is also coming for PC Windows and MS-DOS CD-ROM.

Policenauts (Konami/3DO) is a "Hogan's Alley" pop-op shooter built with the **Lethal Enforcer** engine. The only original element: Good guys can magically morph into bad guys and vice versa.

Revolution X (Acclaim/SNES, Genesis) is probably Acclaim's last Midway coin-op conversion. The maniac shooter will be available this summer. Acclaim has announced 32X and PC CD-ROM editions arriving in time for next Christmas.

Starblade (Namco/3DO) is ported straight from the coin-op, with some minor differences. It's a polygon-rotation shooter, an

IT'S LIKE GOING BACK TO THE MESOZOIC ERA.

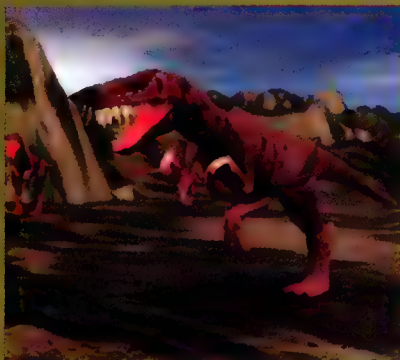
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It may be Eden, but a garden it's not. It's a primeval land filled with rain forests, marshy plains and flesh-eating neighbors named "Rex." Not to mention a slew of other dinosaurs, from the peaceful, grass-eating Brontosaurus to the brutal Velociraptor. In Lost Eden, you play Adam--not the first man on Earth, but



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possibly the last. That is, if you can't unite the creatures of four continents against a tyrannical Tyrannosaurus Rex. The task is simple: Save mankind. If you're successful, you're a hero. If you fail, you're a fossil.



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overstocked category, but it is very well implemented. Looks like a good addition to the platform's library.

StarFox 2 (Nintendo/SNES), set to fly in August, is more of the same with improvement courtesy of the SFX2 chip. The two-player contest features planes that morph into land fighters.

Tempo (Sega/32X) stars a grasshopper character in a **Sonic**-style platform action fest. The animation is incredible in this fun game for younger players.

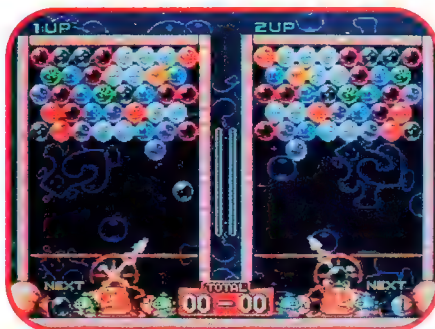
TimeCop (JVC/Sega CD, SNES), out this month, resembles the unpublished Steven Seagal game developed by Riedel Software Productions for Tecmagik. Based on the Van Damme flick, it uses digitized characters against bit-mapped platform scenarios. Fighting sequences are standard punch-and-kick with a gun.

Turok, Dinosaur Hunter (Acclaim/Ultra 64) is one of the properties the publisher acquired with its purchase of Valiant. Acclaim plans to ready the game, for which there was no demo, at the same time that Nintendo introduces the platform.



Action-Strategy/Strategy

Bust-A-Move (Taito/SNES) is one of the most original takes yet on **Tetris**. Players fire a cannon at spheres to create similarly colored clusters. Based on a coin-op, **Bust a Move** is cute but doesn't have eye-popping frills.



Comanche (Nintendo/SNES) is another SFX2 entry. It uses voxel graphics to give this helicopter simulator a three-dimensional feel. The one- or two-player cart doesn't look or feel like Novalogic's PC original. It has a split-screen view, or players can link their consoles with a cable for full-screen, head-to-head combat.



Kirby's Avalanche (Nintendo/SNES) is another **Tetris/Robotnik** puzzle game with 16 levels and four different settings. The March release has graphics on a par with **Robotnik**.

Phear (Atari/Jaguar) has amazing, 3-D super-graphics and a lot of strategy. It could become the **Tetris** of the 1990s. Animation is a blistering 70K polygons per second.

Rayman (UBI Soft/Jaguar) is one of the most unique SGI-style graphic presentations ever seen. Characters have heads, torsos, hands and feet, but no arms and legs. It looks ray-traced, hence the name. This could be an offbeat hit in the making.

Varuna's Forces (Atari/Jaguar CD) lets digital commanders control army personnel in a variety of fighting environments, like side-scroll and the popular **Doom**-style. The second-quarter entry has visuals that look TV quality.

Sports

Burn Out (Virtual Experiences/Jaguar) is a two-player, split-screen motorcycle game with very responsive control. The surprisingly realistic polygon graphics move at 60 frames per second. The game has a low-violence quotient, but lots of action on eight tracks.

Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball (Acclaim/SNES, Genesis) is a 24-Meg cartridge with the Chicago White Sox slugger as the figurehead. Editions for the 32X and CD-ROM are scheduled.

Payne Stewart Pro Golf (Time-Warner/Genesis) projects the course terrain and ball flight in a 3-D, real-time environment. Hard to know if this April introduction will make the cut in a crowded field.

Power Drive Rally (TWI/Jaguar) is a top-of-the-line driving game that adds strategy to the arcade action. It features over 50 tracks with road rally elements like weather and obstacles. Slalom courses add a stunt driving aspect to the game.

Wayne Gretzky NHLPA All-Stars (Time-Warner/Genesis) is only so-so, despite the double-barreled license. High points are the 3-D imaging and expert play-features.



Adventure/RPG

Earthbound (Nintendo/SNES), due in April, is a 24-Meg RPG. This unusual game, aimed at the teen/young adult audience, includes some science-fiction elements. **Earthbound**, already available in Japan as **Mother II**, doesn't have graphics as good as comparable products despite very large character sprites.

Secret of Evermore (Square Soft/SNES), a 24-Meg cartridge, uses SGI and Alias graphic wizardry for monsters and backgrounds. This is a **Zelda**-style role-playing game not connected to **Secret of Mana** or the **Final Fantasy** series. Doug (**Lode Runner**) Smith did the development on Square Soft's first Stateside project.

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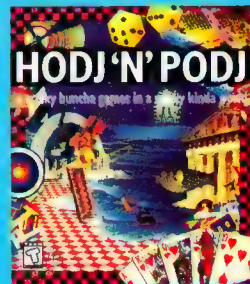
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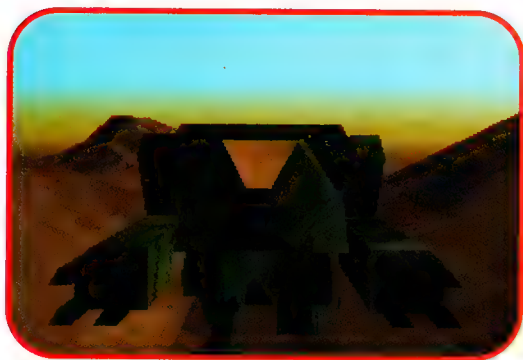
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Computer Picks: Action/Action-Strategy

Atari 2600 Action Packs (Activision/Windows CD, Windows PC) is four volumes, 10 to 15 titles per volume, of cartridge classics. The first release includes **Pitfall**, **Kaboom**, **River Raid**, **Chopper Command** and **Grand Prix**. This package is sure to appeal to the nostalgic gamer.

The Last Bounty Hunter (ALG/PC CD-ROM) casts the player as a bounty hunter in search of four outlaws. Lots of six-gun fun and shotgun shootouts in a cinematic version of the Old West.

MechWarrior 2: The Clans (Activision/MS-DOS, MS-Dos CD) is more of the same in a new box. The hot button is the add-on disk with four-legged BattleMechs.



Saturnide (ALG/3DO), for PC CD-ROM in June, is a departure for this publisher. It offers 15 levels of arcade excitement in a multivehicle action shooter. Utilizes an overhead viewpoint that tracks the current vehicle.

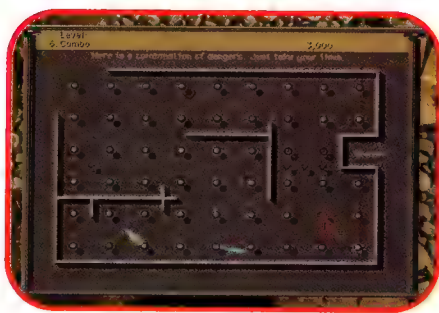
Top Gun (Spectrum Holobyte/PC CD-ROM), a heavy-duty F-14 flight simulator, is loosely based on the movie. The April product features digitized sequences in 50 missions. The sim is accurate, but streamlined compared to **Falcon**.

Strategy

Advanced Civilization (Avalon Hill/PC CD-ROM) is based on the board game, not the Sid Meier electronic strategy title. The focus is the Mediterranean basin from the Stone Age to about 250 B.C. A play-by-e-mail module accommodates eight participants.

Clockwerx (Spectrum Holobyte/PC/March) contains over 100 puzzles of an entirely new type. The object is to move a rotating arrow through a connecting field of dots without impacting any of the clever traps that can destroy it.

Shanghai: Great Moments (Activision/Windows CD, Mac CD) has tiles



that depict memorable scenes from history, motion pictures and TV. After a match is made, the tiles expand and show the whole clip. It's a great idea, but implementation still needs firming up.

Silent Hunter (SSI/PC CD-ROM) simulates Pacific WWII submarine warfare with awesome graphics and much better game play than **Aces of the Deep**. Completely realistic coastlines allow players to venture into enemy harbors to observe or attack.

Triazzle, (Berkeley Systems/Windows CD-ROM, MS-DOS CD-ROM, Mac CD) gives puzzle-solvers an FMV reward when they assemble a picture. Based on the popular board game, it has well-rendered animations of rain forest creatures.

Third Reich (Avalon Hill PC CD-ROM) is a faithful electronic translation of the board game. The

March release has four scenarios, one of which is the 39-46 campaign game.

War Patrol (Alliance Interactive/PC CD-ROM, Mac CD) updates **Silent Service II**. It features more than 40 3-D-modeled ships and aircraft. The interface is intuitive point-and-click, and a scenario editor generates new missions.

Sports

Alex Dampier World Hockey '95 (Merit/PC CD-ROM) rates over 3,200 individual players statistically and has good direct control of the active skater. It includes the 25 hockey teams from the NHL plus some of the international teams as well.

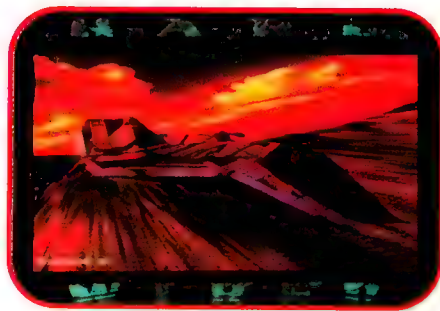
Slipstream 5000 (Gremlin/MS-DOS CD) lets gamers drive land-roving hydrofoils around the world. Most tracks are roofed, so it's low level but very fast racing. This is exciting, much better than **MegaRace** and other similar games.

Adventure/RPG

Alone in the Dark 3 (I-Motion/PC CD-ROM) is the newest exploit of Edward Carnby. This third-person perspective graphic,

adventure whisks the player from 1920s Hollywood to Slaughter Gulch, a ghost town doorway to the realm of the undead. The objective of the game is to rescue the captured Emily Hartwood and save California from a disaster.

Hardwired (Novalogic/MS-DOS CD-ROM) is an end-of-summer release. The cyberpunk thriller, which is based on the novel, is the developer's first foray into adventures. It could be a very strong debut.



Harvester (Merit/PC CD-ROM), the horror adventure by Austin, will finally reach stores in June. The player, suffering from amnesia, wakes up one morning in a town full of strangers, some of whom claim to be family. Exceptionally strong content makes this a sure-fire hit.

Johnny Mnemonic (Sony Imagesoft/MS-DOS CD-ROM) brings the William Gibson story to the interactive screen. The hero has sensitive information stored in his mind, but he doesn't know what it is. Sony will probably have its premiere coincide with the launch of the movie.

Marco Polo (I-Motion/PC CD-ROM), for second quarter, mixes strategy and adventure. As Marco Polo, the player organizes caravans. Sixty locations await exploration.

Prisoner of Ice (I-Motion/PC CD-ROM) is the second installment in the H.P. Lovecraft *Call of Cthulhu* series. Players wind their way through dozens of locations to figure out the connection between the occult and the Nazis.

Star Trek: A Final Unity (Spectrum Holobyte/PC CD-ROM) has the seven principal *Next Generation* stars doing the voices. The plot concerns an alien race's plan to rule the universe with a super-scientific device.

Entertainment

Totally Twisted (Berkeley Systems/Windows CD-ROM, MS-DOS CD-ROM, Mac CD) is a screen saver wacky enough even for Bill Kunkel! There are 12 modules, all compatible with **After Dark**. Our favorite: **Mime Hunt**.

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radars.

TO NAIL THEM,

you've got the firepower

of an army.

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Games of the Heart



An Interview With AL LOWE

by Steve Kent

Though Al Lowe is one of the premier names in computer games, he's not as widely recognized as his famous creation, the morally impaired Larry Laffer. Short, fat and dressed like John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*, Laffer (a.k.a. Leisure Suit Larry) has struck out with more women than any other five computer dweebs combined. What makes Leisure Suit Larry so lovable, and ultimately fun to watch, is that no matter how often he's rejected, he keeps trying just as hard.

According to Lowe, there are no interactive games built around love stories. "I can't even think of a game with a strong love theme," he admits. "It's funny, but I'd guess that the majority of titles in other mediums are about love. For some reason, interactive games do not lend themselves to that theme.

"I talked about doing a romantic game this year. I was looking at creating a product that combined humor with a strong love message. I sort of had the movie *Mrs. Doubtfire* in mind. That was an excellent movie dealing with the love of a father," says Lowe. "I couldn't do it. I thought of several different things to put in the game, but it just wouldn't come out. The medium just isn't ready for love stories.

"I'm not sure that it can't be done," says Lowe. "Some time in the future you'll probably see some love stories."

One of the problems with creating a computer game about love is the interactivity associated with computer games. With all of the variables that go into creating a romance, the game would either have a restrictive format or follow a very linear story line.





a lot of people talked about both programs as if they were the same thing.

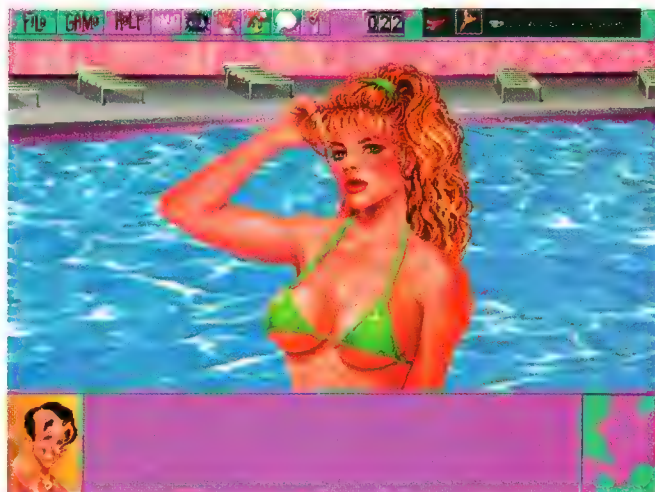
"I even had several female reporters say that my game was anti-women. Well, if you've ever played a Larry game, you know it's anti-men if it's anti anything." In truth, the laughs in Lowe's games are usually at Larry Laffer's expense.

When asked to name current titles that he classifies as romantic software, the first products that Al Lowe could think of were **Man Enough?** and Dr. Ruth Westheimer's CD. "I saw Dr. Ruth recently," says Lowe. "She's damn short." Since he had not actually seen her CD, Lowe had nothing to say about it.

Lowe also had little to comment about **Man Enough?**, an interactive CD published by Tsunami. "A bunch of my old friends made it. It was a good first attempt with a great cover."

According to Lowe, there have been some cheap **Leisure Suit Larry** imitations. "There was a game called **Les Manley** by Accolade. Great name for a character isn't it? It was just like my games. They even included a scene where a character that looked just like Larry walked by an open door. If you clicked on him he said some kind of wisecrack."

According to Lowe, a lot of people misunderstand **Leisure Suit Larry** games, especially people who don't play them. "My games aren't about sex. They're about humor, sort of an interactive version of the **Benny Hill Show**." The first **Leisure Suit Larry** came out about the same time that another company released a much raunchier game called **MacPlaymate**. Lowe says that



One problem with computer games, Lowe observes, is a severe lack of humor. "A lot of companies include jokes in their games, but genuinely funny games are rare." When asked to name companies that publish truly humorous games, Lowe said that LucasArts was the only company that came to mind. "**Sam and Max** and **Day of the Tentacle** were very funny. Even **Monkey Island** had good humor."



Though he does not see himself as a celebrity in the industry, Lowe does admit that he is notable among the early game makers. "I was one of the first people to put personality into software. I think that was because I wasn't a programmer, a math major or a computer-science major.

"I was a humanities major. I knew about musicals and shows, drama, movies and staging. I didn't have a strong talent in data structures and all of the things that real computer people know. What I did know was storytelling, and I wasn't afraid to put personality into my software."

Though not even Al Lowe would describe **Leisure Suit Larry** games as romantic, they have at times touched upon the topic of love. "Just like the title of the fourth game

suggests, Larry's looking for love in several wrong places. He has an occasional experience, but it never works out."

Actually, Larry Laffer did find love in **Leisure Suit Larry 2**. Chief Keniwawa (a character based on Sierra On-Line president, Ken Williams) agreed to let Larry marry his daughter if he could succeed at three Herculean tasks. The last, which proved to be Larry's undoing in **Leisure Suit Larry 3**, was to write a program in Assembler. "Larry created a multiuser, multitasking operating system for 8088 computers called EUNICHS. In short, it was an operating system with no balls," says Lowe.

For completing the tasks, Larry was allowed to marry the chief's daughter. By the next game, however, she had become jaded and left him for another woman.

Since his unique brand of humor has developed a loyal following, Sierra On-Line includes Lowe's picture on all of his software. He doesn't consider himself a star, but he is sometimes recognized. "I'm a musician, and a lot of times people hire the band I play with for weddings. Once in a while people recognize me."

On the other hand, Lowe bears a striking resemblance to film director Rob Reiner. "Ken Williams and I recently went to a restaurant. A woman looked at me and started choking on her steak, so I just smiled and said 'No. That's not me.'"





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EG goes head to head with Pat Cook of Dynamix, creator of Front Page Sports Football.

by John Wesley Hardin



“It makes me sick to play the original **Front Page Sports Football**,” says Dynamix’s Pat Cook. “But at the time it came out, it was light-years ahead of everything. We use that as a basis for what we built into **Football Pro** and **Football Pro ‘95**. The same thing is going to happen for baseball. Now, we just released the (**FPS Baseball**) expansion disks today. All the bugs are fixed, all the AI is fixed, all the scoring errors—everything is fixed. It’s a great, great game. I wish it could have been that way six months ago, but it’s done and now we have a fantastic base to build next year’s game.”

Pat Cook is a 12-year industry veteran. After leaving college, he went to work for Sierra, then left to do work with seminal gaming house Cinemaware. After the demise of that company, Pat signed on with Acme Interactive, where he became proficient at designing sports games, before making the final move to Dynamix.

Speaking of next year’s game, EG pursued, what features can we look for in future FPS games?

“Well, one of the things we want to do is make the AI stuff better. We also want to focus on our next leap forward in graphics, and I think you can look for stuff like hi-res graphics and a windows interface. Picture opening a window to examine the player’s roster of the Atlanta Braves, and another where you can look at the Cub’s roster, and if you want to trade a guy, just drag him from one window to the other.”

EG: We’ve heard there has been a recent shuffling at Dynamix.

“I am now executive director of sports. I was executive producer of all Front Page Sports titles, but as the development team grew, I found more and more of my time dedicated to things like budgeting, spreadsheets, hiring and firing, reviews and all that kind of stuff. I was getting way, way far away from the actual game design.”

Pat describes his new position as “much more of a creative overview and creative steering. I guess I kind of think of it as ‘there’s leadership and there’s management in a given group.’ A leader is the kind of guy who says, ‘Let’s take the boat that way,’ while the manager is the guy in the boat who makes sure the navigation aids are working, that there’s enough steam in the boiler to get where the leader wants to go. Makes sure the boat is not leaking.

“I’m moving more toward where I ought to be; that leader position more than that manager position.”

So how does Pat like being captain? “Oh, it’s great. It’s fantastic. It’s what kept me here.”

EG: Were you thinking about leaving Dynamix at one time?

“I was never thinking about going anywhere, but people always call, especially after some of the successes we have had here.

“Here I was lucky enough to build a team. The designers, artists and programmers really jelled into a good team. There’s no way I could ever get away from these guys. One of the big things that drives me—makes me get up in the morning—is the people I work with. That’s a very big part of it. I enjoy what I do very much but I don’t know that I would enjoy it nearly as much if I didn’t have the same group of guys to work with.”

EG: Speaking of game design, what’s your group working on now?

“The biggest new thing we have coming out now would be

basketball, which is the hardest sport to simulate. Hands down. It's the most difficult to do for a myriad of reasons. One, the entire game is almost all reactionary, unlike football where there are very distinct times where play starts and stops. It's divided into short segments and you can design plays. There's so much more 'what if' in basketball. 'What if there's nobody in front of me. What if there's a guy in front of me? What if one is on my left and one on the right? What if I don't have any other teammates available to pass to? What if I have a guy wide open under the basket?'

"There are more variables that have to be written. Baseball is a game of routine, as George Will, Bob Costas and all the baseball analysts will tell you. When you know how many outs there are and you know where the guys are on the bases, you know exactly what you have to do when the ball comes to you.



"In football, you do make a few decisions on the fly, but they are small decisions. If someone is in front of you, you may have to cut left or cut right, but it doesn't change the pass route; you still know which way you're supposed to run, you still know who you're supposed to block. Basketball and hockey are much more free flowing, and are more difficult to simulate."

EG: So can we look for *Front Page Sports Hockey* anytime soon?

"Hockey's not something we're still looking at. After we got burned on the baseball lockout this year and the hockey strike went through ... We were going to do hockey for next year, but after the lockout came on we just said, 'Nope, we're not going to do that twice.'"

EG: So how are you being affected by the baseball strike?

"We found out from retail surveys that not only were the games not making money, but all merchandising, clothes, baseball caps, etc., everything was getting beaten up because of the strike this year. **FPS Baseball** shipped the day the strike started. It sold pretty well at first, but as the strike wore on, people got angrier and angrier at baseball. It definitely had an impact. It's not like we're sitting here saying, 'Oh man, we'll never make another baseball game.' It didn't ruin the game for us but we felt the result."

EG: On the subject of sports sims, what one quality unites all good sports games?

"I think there are a lot of different niches in the sports market. There's a big market for

replay. Some people like to take a season and play it over and over and see how close they can come to the statistical summary. There are games that do that very well. If you look at something like **HardBall 4**, there aren't a lot of stats, but they give the player a lot of fun—a lot of arcade action, but you're not going to get the strong statistical replay there.

"We try to have a little bit of everything in ours. You could break out individual pieces of our product and match it up side by side with the best products that do that niche. We might not be the best one. We may not have the stats of **Stratomatic Baseball** or the arcade game of **HardBall 4**, but as a complete package, there's no contest against us.

"We aren't trying to re-create the NFL, we're trying to re-create the environment of the NFL. If you want to know who's going to win the big game, sit down in front of the TV and watch it. Don't play our game and expect to go, 'Oh look, the 49ers are going to win it by 23 points.' But if you want the environment that NFL coaches, players and managers have to deal with, that's what we give you. You can have your own miniature version of the NFL. That's what we try to do.

"I have a folder called 'Perfect Football.' Perfect Football has everything you could ever think of in it. It's got all the user sendback. It's got drafting, free agency and real money management. Where it's, 'Okay, if I pay this guy \$8 million a year, I can't afford that other guy and I'm not going to get the talent I need. What happens if I raise the ticket prices? What if the players go on strike?'

"If we designed the game the way it's played exactly in the NFL, 99 percent of the people wouldn't have a clue as to what was going on. It may sound kind of condescending, but I've learned from working with professional coaches and players that the average football fan, baseball fan or basketball fan knows a

lot less about what really goes on in the game than they think they do. We try to make the best of what people perceive the sport to be, not necessarily the best model of what the sport really is.

"If you do the absolute best model of the NFL, you're only going to appeal to a very



small market, because professional football is incredibly complex, and most people just wouldn't understand it all. They don't have time to. Professional players do because that's their full-time job, but some guy who has to go to the office 10 hours a day doesn't have time to come home at night and study for the same eight to 10 hours that a professional football player does."

EG: Pat, tell us a secret.

"I've got these hanging folders in my desk drawer, labeled Football '96, Football '97, Football '98 and Football '99, I kid you not. I put things in there when I'm going, 'Oh, boy, I don't think we can do that by next year so we'll put it in '97. By then, we'll be able to implement that.' We listen to all our feedback, and if 500 people write you asking for the same thing, it's pretty important.

"There's a big secret in this business that not a lot of people have discovered: If you actually listen to your customers and give them the features they want, they'll buy your games. It's a revolutionary concept."

Pat Cook (center) and his team of designers in action!





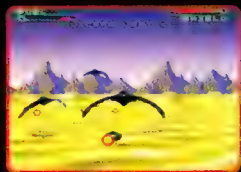
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TOM KALINSKE: PERFORMER OF MIRACLES IN TWO INDUSTRIES

by Steve Kent

Scratch the surface on any successful electronic game manufacturer and you will discover great similarities between the company's corporate personality and the character of its president or CEO. Trip Hawkins, the founder of 3DO, is a suave sophisticate with a passion for technology. Minoru Arakawa, the president of Nintendo of America, and Howard Lincoln, the chairman, make such a strong team because Arakawa's humor and relaxed demeanor balance well with Lincoln's conservative nature and tenaciousness.

Speak with Tom Kalinske, president and CEO of Sega of America, for just a minute and you realize that he is a true marketing genius. While conversations with other game company executives focus on future plans, past successes and technology, conversations with Kalinske always come back to market shares and strategic thinking. He is a man with the skill to analyze situations and the confidence to bet everything on his assessments.

Kalinske gambled when he became president of Sega of America in 1990, staking a reputation he earned over his 15-year tenure as the president of Mattel Toys. He joined Sega at a time when Nintendo had an unprecedented stronghold on the video game industry. Few people believed that any company could ever break Nintendo's grip.

"Everybody told me I was crazy," says Kalinske. "There was no way to compete with this industry giant, Nintendo. They had 92 percent of the market.

Sega, Atari and everybody else had to share the other eight percent."

"To me, while everybody was saying that I could not beat those guys, they seemed ripe for competition. It just didn't seem logical that any one company could dominate with a 92 percent share."

As the new president of Sega of America, Tom Kalinske quickly sized up his company's weaknesses and developed a plan to exploit its strengths. Sega's assets included a wealth of talented people and a technological lead over the competition.

Not everything Kalinske viewed was positive. When it came to improving retailers' impressions of the Sega system, he had a lot of work ahead of him. Nintendo had recently knocked them out of the 8-Bit video game market, and some stores even had Sega Master System inventory left sitting on their shelves.

"It was embarrassing to talk to retailers when I first joined the company. They hated us because we never did what we said we were going to do. Fortunately, they did not like Nintendo either. In those days Nintendo was so arrogant."

The Giant Tamer

One skill that Kalinske developed as president of Mattel was the ability to exploit "arrogant" opponents. "The networks used to totally lock up children's programming and advertising. We were spending millions of dollars and the networks treated us like dirt. They had McDonalds and other big companies, and they acted as if they were doing us a favor by giving us advertising time. It was a very arrogant attitude, but there were no alternatives."

MAGIC TOY MAN

Rather than submit to the networks' tyranny, Kalinske and a Mattel creative team unleashed a diabolical plot that changed the dynamics of children's programming—they produced *HeMan and the Masters of the Universe*.

"Yes, I am the guy that did that to the world," Kalinske admits, visibly satisfied with the monster he invented. "Everybody thinks we created *HeMan* as a marketing ploy, but that's not really accurate. The driving reason for *Masters of the Universe* was to create a viable alternative and shake up the networks."

"*Masters of the Universe* ended up getting a 7.5 rating at a time when the network's shows weren't getting a 7.5 rating. From that point on, the networks were much easier to work with."

As the president of Sega, Kalinske maintained the same attitude toward "arrogant" giants. Sega had already failed to justify the Genesis' \$189 price tag to consumers. The consumer recognized the superior power of the Genesis, but few people switched from the NES. The first year that the Sega Genesis hit the market, Nintendo reportedly sold more NES cartridges and hardware than ever before.

After carefully evaluating the situation, Kalinske decided to rewrite the book on video game marketing. Instead of viewing hardware sales as a profit center, Kalinske decided that the real money would come from software. He focused his efforts on placing



Genesis systems in homes at cost. With more systems in place, Sega stood to sell more software. It was a bold and risky marketing shift—another Kalinske gamble that could easily have cost him his job.

Shortly after joining the company, Kalinske announced his intention to lower the price of the Genesis from \$189 to \$149 in a meeting with executives from Sega of Japan. He also suggested replacing the game that came with the system, *Altered Beast*, with *Sonic the Hedgehog*. His final suggestion was that Sega should take a more aggressive stance in advertising campaigns, telling consumers why Sega was better than Nintendo.

"It was like I'd hit them with a bucket of cold water," says Kalinske. "They asked 'Are you out of your mind? You want to lower the price until we don't have any profit at all? You want to take out our regular software and put in our best software? You want to take on this company that has 92 percent of the market in an advertising campaign? You're crazy!'"

"That's essentially what they told me.

"I thought, well, this is the shortest career anybody ever had. I guess I'd better start looking for something else to do."

The other executives had overlooked the confidence that Hayao Nakayama, the president of Sega of Japan, had in Kalinske's judgment. "As the other guys got up to leave, Nakayama turned and said, 'On the other hand, he [Kalinske] was hired to make decisions for the U.S. market, and if that is what he thinks needs to be done, he should go ahead and do it.'"

Sega of America, led by Tom Kalinske, made marketing history. The wisdom of lowering hardware prices became readily apparent. By 1993, Sega surpassed Nintendo in sales. Today, most game manufacturers keep hardware prices as low as possible.

"Our single greatest



success as a company is our share leadership. I mean, hell, I'd be happy with share-market comparability. The fact that we got leadership—I think that's an amazing feat."

Sega of Japan has been unable to match Kalinske's success. Nintendo's hold on the Japanese market remains virtually unchallenged. To date, Sega has placed approximately 4 million units in Japanese homes.

Other Marketing Considerations

Once he received some autonomy, Kalinske did more than lower prices and wage an advertising war. As is his wont, he scrutinized the market in search of an overlooked or underdeveloped audience.

"One of the strengths I brought with me from working in the toy industry was strategic thinking and an understanding of segmented markets. I saw that our primary audience was over 18 years of age. Nintendo tended to focus on the younger kids.

"We attempted to focus on an older crowd. Forty percent of our business is over 18 years old."

Sega caught that older audience through advertising and developing titles geared for them. "We all saw that sports games were important for keeping the older audience. The Genesis has become the system for playing sports games. This year Electronic Arts sold two to three times more copies of *Madden '95* for Genesis than SNES."

“They asked, 'Are you out of your mind? You want to lower the price until we don't have any profit at all? You want to take out our regular software and put in our best software? You want to take on this company that has 92 percent of the market in an advertising campaign? You're crazy!'”

Along with publishing more games for older markets, Sega designed advertising campaigns that reached the older crowd. Some of the slogans introduced in this campaign include "Welcome to the Next Level," and the "Sega!" Scream.

According to Kalinske, Sega's targeted advertising has had a powerful impact on the targeted age group. "Teenage and college-age kids have adopted the Sega Scream. I was backstage at a rap concert, and I watched rappers who didn't know who I was meet each other with the 'Sega!' Scream. 'SEGA!' It was kind of like saying hello."

Sega's Place in the High-End Market

Three companies have announced the pending release of high-end game systems this year—Nintendo, Sega and Sony. As the market changes to accommodate new competitors with advanced technologies, Kalinske sees Sega solidifying its market leadership. "We'll be very aggressive in our marketing. We just have to continue to show superior titles and depth of software."

"The Sony PlayStation is a good hardware platform. It's going to come down to software and marketing. People will have to judge the entire library. They have a fighting game and we have a fighting game. They have a driving game, **Ridge Racer**, and we have a driving game, **Daytona**. I think that **Daytona** will beat **Ridge Racer** hands down over time."

Though Nintendo claims that the Ultra 64 will play cartridges, Kalinske says Nintendo will eventually have to put a CD player on their system. (Both the Sega Saturn and the Sony PlayStation play CDs instead of cartridges.) "I see the Ultra 64 as being a cartridge system for about six months. I think it will come out at a low price with five terrific-looking games. Nintendo will suck the consumer in and then come out and say, 'By the way, now you have to buy this \$150 CD-ROM attachment.'"

"They'll have to. The economics are just too difficult in the cartridge world. The third-party developers see it. The PC world sees it. Everybody sees it. Financially it just does not make sense to tie up so many dollars producing cartridge games. An Ultra 64 cartridge will have a hard cost of \$30 and a CD-ROM disk costs \$3 to produce and holds more."

Even with the new high-end systems hitting the market this year, Kalinske predicts that the 16-Bit games and hardware will account for the vast majority of sales. "The total market for high-end systems in 1995 is going to be 1-1.25 million units. That's it for



all the systems combined—PSX, Saturn, 3DO. There aren't that many people who will pay. Whether it's \$349 or \$449. There's just a small group of people who will pay that kind of money in the first year.

The Real Kalinske

Though Tom Kalinske has had a tremendous string of successes, he still takes pride in past accomplishments. He remembers many of his past successes at Mattel with pride. "A lot of the time, when I meet people, ladies in particular, I'll judge their age and I'll ask about a certain toy. I'll ask, 'Did you have a Sweet Sixteen Barbie?' They look surprised and say they did. It makes me feel old, but it makes me feel good."

Just as he takes pride in past successes, Kalinske remembers disappointments. "My biggest disappointments have been really good games that never got anywhere. I thought the games **Cool Spot** and **Greendog** would have done well. Even though **Sonic and Knuckles** sold well, I think it should have sold better. We never clearly communicated the message to consumers about what lock-on technology could do to old software. **Sonic and Knuckles** would have received more attention any other year, but this year everything was overshadowed by **Donkey Kong Country**."

Unlike the top executives of most game manufacturers, Tom Kalinske plays video games for pleasure. He has five children, including a 10-year-old and an 8-year-old who frequently beats him at **Virtua Fighter**. The Kalinskes have the arcade coin-op in their home.

"I love **Virtua Fighter**. There are so many different moves. You'll be fighting another player, or even the computer, and all of a sudden you see a move you've never seen before. I usually stop and wonder where it came from."

A beginning golfer, Kalinske has developed a fascination with video golf. He plays **PGA Tour Golf**, by Electronic Arts, on his PC and **Fred Couples Golf** on his Genesis. "Like many golfers, I have a slice and fade

From **Doom** for the 32X to the coin-op version of **Virtua Fighter**, Tom Kalinske plays and enjoys a variety of electronic games for the console and the PC. **PGA Tour Golf** is pictured below along with **Virtua Fighter** at the bottom.

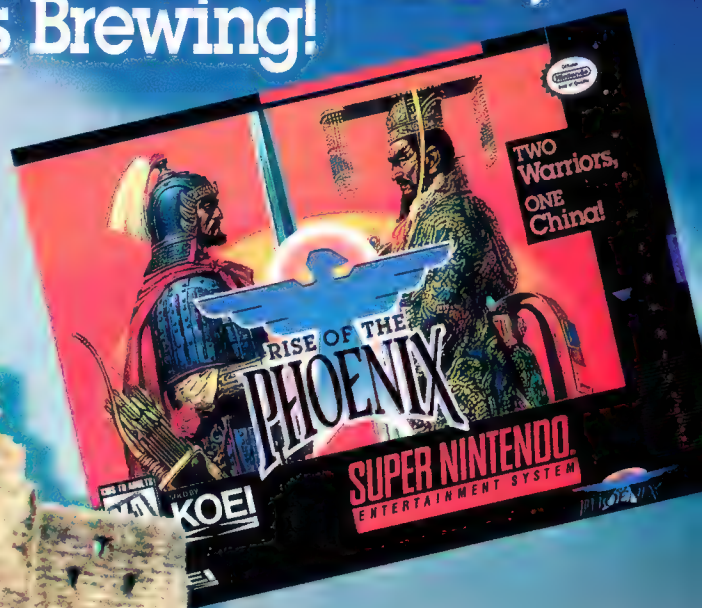


when I play real golf. I have the same problem with computer and video golf, and I can't explain how that can be."

Though he gravitates to sports games, Kalinske also admits a certain fascination with **Doom**, which is available for the Sega 32X. "I kind of enjoy **Doom**. There's something about it that's hard to explain. When you play it, you really get drawn into it and you get that feeling of tension. It's addictive. You're always wondering what's around the next corner and is it going to get me?"

If **Doom** were a marketing game, the answer would probably be "No."

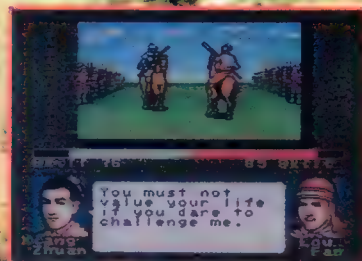
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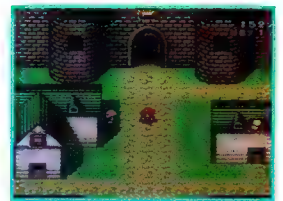
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A look at the updated ImagiNation Network

IMAGINE THAT!

The ImagiNation Network (INN) has entertained members all over the country and some parts of Canada since its origins as The Sierra Network (TSN, with a test group of 2,000 volunteers) in California in 1990. Early this year, INN plans to release the latest edition (Version 2.4) of their graphical interface that has changed dramatically since the early days. INN Version 2.4 not only makes basic functions like e-mail easier to access at the request of the members, but it also adds completely new areas, games and services to the network known as "the friendliest place in cyberspace."

For those unfamiliar with INN, some basic explanations are necessary. INN is a complete point-and-click environment made up of a small number of areas, or Lands, where game enthusiasts can play board, action, classic, trivia and sports games or chat with other members. In each Land, members use a FaceMaker program to design a unique persona (or "toon" as it is popularly known on-line) from clothes, accessory and face parts that might represent their real selves or an alter ego to the on-line community. A name, or handle, goes along with this toon to complete the representation. Many people change their toons' clothes or facial expressions from day to day, but few change their handles unless some other member has the same (or a similar) name. For example, since January 1992, this author has used the handle "RCCola" in all Lands and the mailbox number 15614.

INN Version 2.4 adds two new locations and both reorganizes and updates the remaining Lands. The Arena is the hot, new location for members to play their favorite INN games and the new on-line version of Dynamix's **Front Page Sports: Football, Red Baron and 3-D Golf** have been removed from SierraLand to join **FPS: Football** in the Arena. **FPS: Football** is a multiplayer adaptation of the stand-alone version of the popular football game. The play only

By Russ Ceccola

involves exhibition games, but players can set up plays off-line and incorporate them into their on-line strategy. The Arena also features a brand-new FaceMaker style for toons and access to e-mail.

The Little Red Funhouse is not an entirely new location on the Main Map. It exists in previous versions of the INN as the School House, but there was nothing in the red building when members clicked on it. The Funhouse has a new FaceMaker that creates toons that look like little kids. Each member also has a personal locker to be used as a

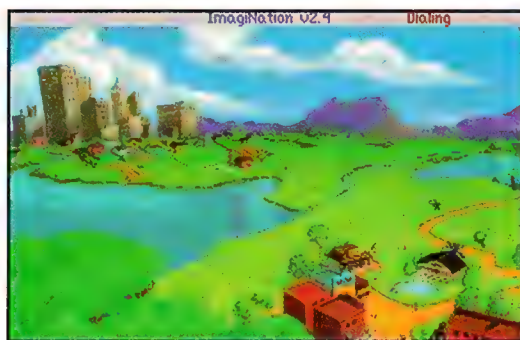
trophy case and messaging center. Members find the long-awaited Cyberplex within the Funhouse, a source of a number of edutainment games for children on INN. Games such as **GuessASketch** (a drawing game), **SpeedSmarts** (a racing game where cars are powered by the correct solutions to math problems) and **Caverns** (an action/adventure exploration game) challenge children as they both have fun and learn.

The Clubhouse gets **Team Bridge**, as well as updated **Hearts** and **Spades** interfaces. The most important modification to **Hearts** and **Spades** is the ability of someone watching a game to take the place of someone who drops out or leaves the network. SierraLand gets a new game called **Yacht**, a dice game in which players match particular die combinations for points. INN Version 2.4 also changes e-mail access so that players in SierraLand and CasinoLand can visit the Mail Room without making a trip to the Main Map.

CasinoLand finally introduces something members have asked about for a long time—personal ads. Many INN members have met companions and mates on-line. CasinoLand was originally designed for adults, so it logically follows that personals should be in this Land. INNtroduitory personal ads are a neat way for members to find a playing partner, new friend or that perfect mate.

INN Version 2.4 is a living example of INN's commitment to its members to create the most fun and exciting network in cyberspace.

Many of the enhancements in Version 2.4 came from suggestions by members. Rather than incrementally upgrade the network every few months, INN has instead saved up a list of major changes and introduced a new version that includes them all. Members old and new will find INN to be a friendly, fun place to spend lots of hours each week playing games and chatting with friends around the country.



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TEST LAB

The Swing's The Thing

Are you tired of paying exorbitant greens fees to enjoy golf? Or perhaps you live in an area where the seasons prohibit year-round play? Either way, you've probably only gotten a small measure of solace from computer simulations thus far. After all, timing your swing on a power gauge just isn't the same as feeling the club in your hand? The swing's the thing that sets golfers apart from one another, and Sports Sciences has come up with a peripheral to prove that point off the course.

Lately it seems that all companies are rushing to capitalize on the interactive computing experience. The Test Lab offices have been flooded with new input devices, ranging from data gloves to rudder pedals. Some are good, most are not. Fortunately, Sports Sciences' new **PC Golf** system is a pleasant addition to the list of successes.

Touted as the only computer golf game with swing, **PC Golf** and **The Pro Swing System** is designed to work in conjunction with Access Software's popular **Links 386 Pro** gaming system (including all of the add-on courses). While **Links 386** is a great golf game in its own right, it still lacks a certain amount of realism. **Links** has provided golfers the opportunity to play courses they might never be able to see, or to try out a course they will be playing ahead of time, but it has always lacked the one thing that the game revolves around: the swing.

Your swing will make or break you on the golf course, and there is no way to accurately duplicate real-world performance with a mouse. **PC Golf** replaces your mouse with a 26-inch golf club, and the traditional swing gauge with a light-sensing base unit set on the floor. Now instead of going to the driving range to work on your swing, all you have to do is turn on your PC.

PC Golf comes with a light-sensing base unit, the club, a 12-foot serial cable, and an AC adapter with an eight-foot cord, **The Country Club Golf Game—Pro Version** installation disk and manuals for the club and the game. The minimum hardware/software requirements are as follows:

386SX/16MHz CPU (486DX/33MHz recommended), 2MB RAM (8MB recommended), a mouse, Super VGA monitor and card capable of 640 x 480 resolution in 256 colors, a free serial communications port and **Links 386 Pro** software installed. The software installation automatically finds your **Links 386** directory and configures the game to work with your new club. Instead of using the Access batch files, you now start the game with the file **CCPRO.BAT**.

There are only three steps to installing the hardware. First, plug one end of the simulator data (serial) cable into the base unit and the other into a free serial port on your PC. Next, plug the AC adapter into the base unit and the wall. Finally, put two AA batteries in the club. There, that was painless. Now you are ready to tee off.

The club, although considerably shorter than even a putter, was carefully engineered to duplicate the feel of any full-size club. The designers at Sports Sciences spent a considerable amount of time on mathematical and physical analysis to give their club the feel and rotational inertia of a full club. In case you didn't know, a matched set of golf clubs is designed so that all the clubs feel the same when you swing them. As such, this one simulated club can accurately duplicate any club in the bag. The **PC Golf** club also has a caddie wheel on the head that allows it to be set for right- or left-handed players, thus one only needs one unit no matter how many people are playing the round. The shortened club, combined



with the padded head and wrist strap, make indoor play easy and safe. The average person should be able to swing in a room with a small open area and an eight-foot ceiling.

The club head has been replaced by a weighted, balanced cylinder. A half-moon shaped light is projected from a solid state LED in the end of the club head to give the player a visual reference of the angle at which they are addressing the ball. The base unit has 10 light sensors to monitor the swing: four behind the ball (which resembles a track ball, but you never make contact with it) and six in front. You address the ball with the flat side of the light beam representing the club face.

During the swing, the light beam passes over the sensors, which are tuned to the same frequency as the club. The angle of the club face is determined by which sensors on

the back of the ball were triggered first. If the sensors farthest from you are triggered before the ones close to you, the base pad knows that your club was turned in and the ball will hook to the left. Likewise, if the sensors closest to you are triggered first, the ball will slice.

The power of your swing is determined by calculating the time between when the light passes over the two center sensors behind the ball and when it triggers the sensors in front of them. As with the mouse and swing gauge in a normal **Links 386** game (and real golf), the harder you hit the ball the greater the deviation. In other words, if you hit the ball with an average swing and your club face is slightly open, the ball will slice slightly to the right. However, if you hold your club face at the same angle and really torque your swing, the ball will slice more severely. The system is so sensitive that it can even detect when you clip the ball. As such, this system can actually help players develop the straight, grooved, even

swing necessary for a consistent game.

Club choice has also been integrated into the **PC Golf** system. Instead of using the mouse to select a club on screen, you merely pass the club over the club select sensor on the base unit, and it will scroll through all possible selections. **The Country Club Golf Game—Pro Version** seamlessly interacts with **Links 386 Pro** to provide an enjoyable golfing experience. The only noticeable difference is that the on-screen golfer and the swing meter are no longer displayed: The player is now the golfer.

The game will always aim you straight at the pin but you can change the direction using the mouse in order to avoid hazards and to work around dog-leg fairways. The shot types and setup no longer have any effect on the game since all of these variables are now determined by your interface with the club. The record player feature is still functional and will allow you to play other Sports Sciences golf simulator owners or yourself. It is recommended that you not play a recorded player who recorded the game in **Links 386** using a mouse, as unpredictable results will occur. Sports Sciences also operates a bulletin board service (216-963-0269) with user forums, technical support and file areas. You can upload your recorded games and download games recorded by others to provide variety.

The Pro Swing System is similar to **PC Golf** and uses the same club. The difference

is that **The Pro Swing System** can be used independently of your PC to practice anywhere. The base unit is longer and has displays to show club face angle, position of the club face at impact, angle of attack and follow-through, club head speed at impact, club selection, distance the ball would have traveled and flight path. The base unit can be powered by four C-cell batteries or an AC adapter, so you can practice anywhere. After practicing, you can connect this unit to a PC using a standard serial cable, to play **Links 386 Pro**.

Most important of all, **PC Golf** and **The Pro Swing System** provide players with flexibility. These products will never replace the game they model, but they certainly are a welcome enhancement for enthusiasts. Most players will still go to the driving range to practice their swing when circumstances permit, but they will also have a "Rainy Day" Option. Further, when you look at the average cost of a bucket of practice balls, the system pays for itself in less than a year for the average player. Also, in the case of **The Pro Swing System** (which is worth the extra \$30), players will get more immediate feedback on what they are doing right or wrong than they could ever expect on the driving range. It is like having a pro standing at your shoulder coaching you through the golfing process.

Product: PC Golf (\$170) and The Pro Swing System (\$200)
Creator: Sports Sciences, Inc.
System: PC
HD Space: 0.5MB plus existing golf software.
Players: 1-8

.....
 by Ed Dille

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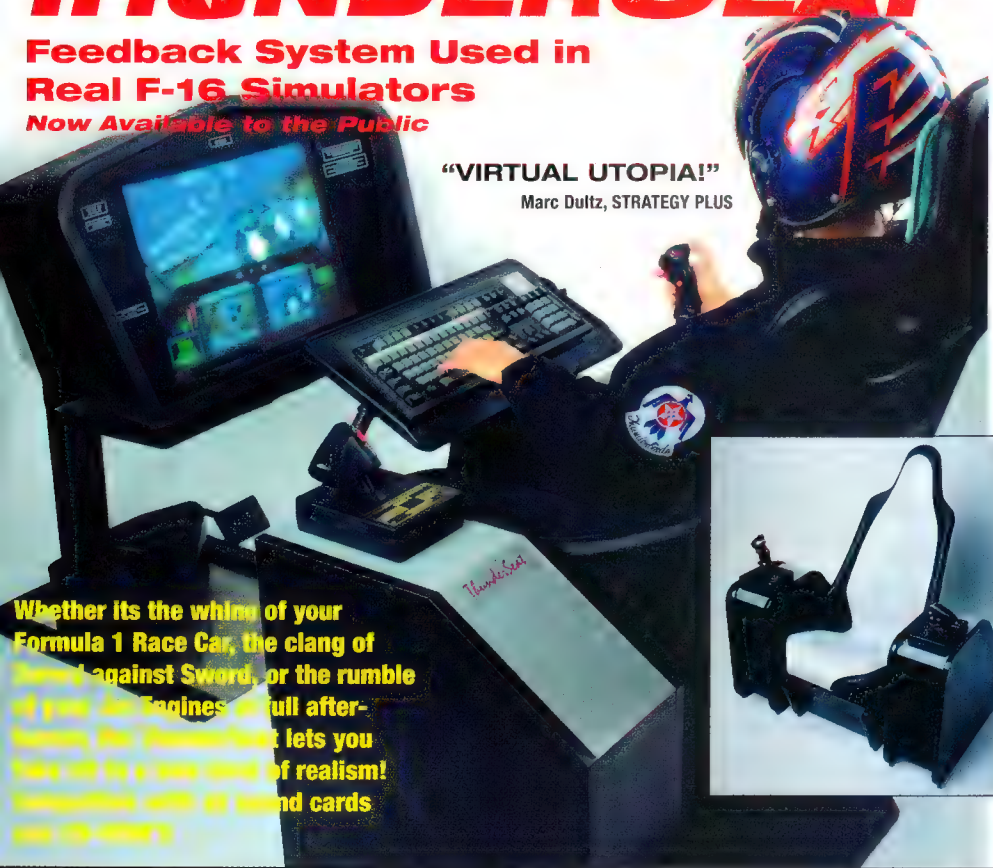
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Batter Up!

So maybe golf isn't your thing. How about baseball? If so, Sports Sciences has a product to cover aficionados of this pastime as well. **Batter Up!** is a reduced-length, neoprene and plastic baseball bat with a Sega three-button controller built into the shaft. When players plug this peripheral into port one of their consoles, they can slug it out with the best of video game baseball.

Simply configure a four-position dip switch on the bat for the specific game title and one is ready to play.

As in golf, the swing's the thing in baseball. Unfortunately, the **Batter Up!** system is not even close to being as sophisticated as its golf counterpart. A centrifugal switch is located on the circuit board that controls the game pad. The switch is programmed to replicate one of the three controller buttons by the dip switches. The manual instructs players to set it up for the batting function, which is generally the A button. The switch is parallel to the button control circuits, so they are not inhibited when the bat is active.

Once configured, any abrupt arcing

motion of the bat triggers this switch. It doesn't matter whether the player is facing the game screen (as in IR control methods) or is even in the room. Further, they are not even required to swing the bat in a normal arc to make contact. Swinging overhead or at your feet is equally effective. In other words, just like controlling the game with



the A button, the system models timing only. Stance, the arc of the bat and power are all ignored. In the case of the latter, the programs revert to the statistical model that underpins them.

Because timing is the issue in either case, players will still be able to pull the ball by swinging early and otherwise try to place their hits. Making contact does require a little bit of practice, simply because there is more of a dynamic in bringing the bat around than in pressing a button.

Because of this, the **Batter Up!** manual

suggests that most games be played in Rookie Mode or its equivalent (such that all pitches are thrown across the middle of the plate). Once a hit is made, the player must bring the bat down and use the control pad to advance any runners more than one base.

Two players can use the **Batter Up!** concurrently in a game by shifting between the two control ports while the game is in progress. This keeps things a bit more interesting than using it against an AI opponent that is allowed to hit normally. Just make sure the game is played in a space open enough to allow both players to swing normally without endangering one another. The

manual also recommends a batting glove and rubber-soled shoes when using this peripheral (for safety's sake).

Batter Up! is fun to mess around with for a while, and seems to hold the

attention of kids longer than adults, but it is nowhere near as satisfying in the long run as the golf systems. The golf peripherals require the player to improve their form to play as well "virtually" as in the real world. Without a concurrent level of sophistication or challenge, the **Batter Up!** peripheral comes across more as a toy than a tool. Granted, that is what it is marketed as, but it could have been much more.

.....
by Ed Dille

Product: Batter Up!
Creator: Sports Sciences, Inc.
System: Sega Genesis



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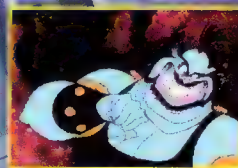
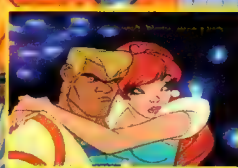
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CATSUPY NINJA

Kasumi Ninja for the Jaguar substitutes gore for awe

Kasumi Ninja is like a child spewing food across the table at Thanksgiving dinner—the youngster just wants to be noticed, but that doesn't make the experience any less unpleasant.

Atari's first one-on-one fighting game for the Jaguar (the only other contender in this genre currently available on the Jaguar is Williams' **Double Dragon**), is like a great primal scream for attention, but whether drawing that notice was wise or not remains to be seen.



Handmade Games, the misdirected developers of **Kasumi Ninja**, apparently decided early on that, if they couldn't produce the best fighting game around, they'd damned well produce the bloodi-

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Atari
SYSTEM: Jaguar
THEME: Fighting Game
MEGABITS: 16
PLAYERS: 1-2
LEVELS: N/A

est. The blood flow begins the instant the game's title appears on screen. In fact, one could drown in virtual hemoglobin before ever toggling on the hypocritical Parental Lock, which shuts down the red stuff. (You *know* the kids will never be able to figure out how to disable it.) The parent enters a code and this theoretically keeps Junior's virgin eyes from the sight of the color red. Of course, these are the same kids who can make Donkey Kong perform an impromptu rumba in any of a dozen secret, unknown levels of the last game they played. Somehow the idea of a parental code keeping them blood-free doesn't have a lot of credibility.

All this talk about what a bloodbath **Kasumi Ninja** is begs the question: Exactly how prominent *is* the blood in

this game?

The answer is that blood is the single most distinctive element in this contest. Blood rules! It gushes, it drips, it spurts and it collects in disgusting puddles on the floor, beneath which the combatants struggle. **Ninja** even uses blood as a *literal* metaphor for life; as it drips from



a pair of pointed swords at the top of the screen, the respective warriors weaken simultaneously on-screen.

Of course, the censors and the squeamish alike will find more than blood to rage about, should this game draw the attention it so stridently begs. One character, for example, lifts his Scottish kilt and delivers a fireball that is unmistakably launched from what Archie Bunker

would call his "groinal regions."

If there is any steam left in the Get-Video Games political movement, this should be the litmus test. If this game doesn't send up a howl of protest, then nobody's watching any more.

Handmade Software didn't miss a cliché in recruiting its cast of fighters, either. Would you believe sexy Danja Ureda, a crime-fighting district attorney by day and a vigilante once the moon comes up? Of course, we never see her during the day, so she could be a meter maid for all the difference it makes to **Kasumi Ninja**. We also have the aforementioned virile Scot (Angus MacGregor, no less), twin ninjas (twinjas?) Senzo and Habaki, a Native American (Pakawa, the Comanche Chief), an Amazonian woman (Thundra), an "Urban Vigilante"



(whatever that is) named Danja and a mysterious *uber*-boss (Lord Gyaku) among a virtual cornucopia of other martial arts games stereotypes.

As for the game's control and play, the news doesn't get any better. In fact, anyone who complained that **Way of the Warrior** (Naughty Dog/3DO) was too stiff will be horrified by the awkward controls that attempt to guide **Kasumi Ninja**. While it is possible, for example, to have one's player-character leap forward and backward, it occurs more often by chance than through design.

The basic moves (kicks, punches, sweeps, blocks, etc.), that are more or less shared by all eight fighters, can be learned with relative ease, but slotting them together into combination attacks is an exercise in futility (especially if a jumping move is involved).

The real problem seems to be that this game, despite its superficial resemblance to **SF2**- and **Mortal Kombat**-type fighters, doesn't use any of the control commands that have been standardized over the years by these games, as well as **Fighter's History**, **Art of Fighting**, **Samurai Shodown** and dozens of others. After all, most of the moves in games such as these are similar because they were originally designed to duplicate the physical motion being performed by the player-surrogate (e.g., pulling the stick to the left to charge a move that will be deliv-

ered to the right or the swooping joystick commands that are used to generate fireballs and *chi* projectiles).

Kasumi Ninja, however, seems to be reinventing the wheel. Even when the moves *do* seem similar

to the classic interpretation, they are so difficult to execute as to render even an experienced fighting game maven frustrated and angry at the attempt.

The so-called special moves, or fatalities—mostly performed by the computer-controlled combatants—are nothing special. One character cuts enemies in half, while another decapitates defeated victims. (Talk about sportsmanship.) Anything to get the fluids a-flowing.

There are also variable endings, depending on the skill level selected, from Easy to Ninja God.

The game also has a strange look to it—even *after* the blood has been wiped away. **Kasumi Ninja** begins in a small, round chamber where the player has a first-person POV at the rotating gallery of characters among whom they must



HOLLYWOOD CALLING

As with many *mano-a-mano* video games, from **Double Dragon** to **Street Fighter**, there may be a film in **Kasumi Ninja**'s future. Gossips are burning up the wires with the news that several studios are interested in making **Kasumi Ninja—The Movie**. Word is that one particular studio has gotten the jump, gathering a cast, screenwriter and director. Starring in the film, according to rumor, will be James "Scotty" Doohan as the brawling Scot with the fiery manhood; Pat Morita and Toshiro Mifune as Senzo and Habaki; Russell Means will portray Pakawa (he plays all multimedia Native Americans; it's the law); Sean Penn is Chagi; Bobcat Goldthwait as Alaric, King of the Goths; while Jack Palance is the mysterious Lord Guaka. Word is they're looking for Quentin Tarantino to write the screenplay with Sam Raimi to direct.

select their surrogate. Clicking on characters generates their biographies, some general ratings and a brief animation of that fighter in action.

For the fighting sequences, the graphics strongly resemble the look of **Mortal Kombat**, but the colors are laid on with a trowel, making the game frequently look like some garish vision from a very early model color TV.

The character animations, however, are almost abysmal, comprising two- and three-frame buzz clips that look so choppy one is occasionally reminded of the games that *predate* **MK**, such as Atari's **Pit Fighter** coin-op (later published on home systems by Tengen).

The background graphics are nicely rendered, but there is almost no animation going on, creating a static ambiance that leaves the player visually unsatisfied without even knowing exactly why.

The bottom line on **Kasumi Ninja** is simple: This is another botch job produced in hopes of pacifying increasingly unhappy Jaguar owners. As the ratio of bad software to good rises perilously, it may become time for Jaguar owners to start doing the math. You can shout all you want about hot-sounding technical specs, but as Shakespeare and the editors of this magazine have maintained: "The *play's* the thing!" In **Kasumi Ninja**, the play is hopeless, and the game is quite a blood-spattered mess. But hope springs eternal, as Atari seems to have a *real* fighting masterpiece in the works—**Fight for Life**, a **Virtua Fighter**-style contest that promises everything **Kasumi Ninja** fails to deliver.

Atari tells consumers to "Do the math!" This seems to translate as: Look at the box and buy the system with the biggest number at the end. We should like, therefore, to close this review with a suggestion that Atari "Do the alphabet" because this game was lucky to get the grade it did. **D** (Bill Kunkel)

CINEMATIC STREET FIGHTER

Supreme Warrior makes a game out of the movies

Okay, so there are a kazillion fighting games out there. You've played them all. Now you don't even want to look at another **Street Fighter** unless it's in three-dimensional perspective, or you get to put on a full-body cybersuit.

We understand. Really. We do.

But what if someone produced a first-person POV fighter that was set in the context of a real chopsocky film, complete with Evil Warlords, supernatural powers and realistic, sound effect-enhanced fighting scenes? In short, how would you like to take a short, albeit



superficial, walk through a real martial arts movie?

Whatever one can say about Digital Pictures' **Supreme Warrior**, it is *no* generic fighting game. Using the legendary Hong Kong studio facilities of Shaw Brothers [see sidebar], DP has created an essentially linear cinematic story line with interactive, first-person fighting sequences.

The plot involves the player-character's theft of a mysterious mask fragment. The Mask of Wei Jian Tsen is a supremely powerful talisman that has been the subject of considerable plotting and double-crossing over the years, until Wei himself broke the mask into two pieces, half of which he placed in the care of Master Kai Chi Tien, the most respected of the Shaolin monks. The



other half he kept with him at all times. Unfortunately, over the years, Fang Tu (son of Wei's second wife, who was corrupted by the Black Flower Cult and was eventually executed by Wei) grew to hate his father and covet the power of the mask. So, as always happens in these movies, he shows up at an opportune moment, commits patricide and grabs his father's half of the mask. Learning of Fang Tu's treachery, Master Kai quickly retrieves the remaining fragment and turns it over to the player-character, "the most trusted disciple of

SHAW BROTHERS

One of the powerful, behind-the-scenes forces in the making of **Supreme Warrior** was Shaw Brothers, the venerable lords of the so-called chopsocky genre, the martial arts films that are ground out like sausage in the siblings' Hong Kong-based studio.

The Shaw Brothers have been the kingpins of kung-fu cinema for several decades, dating back to the glory days of Bruce Lee (*Enter the Dragon*, *Five Fingers of Death*, etc.), and their cooperation with Tom Zito's Digital Pictures helps give **Supreme Warrior** a look and feel never before experienced by electronic gamers. With real martial arts film stars and skilled combatants in key roles, Shaw Brothers give the game *real* street credibility.

the ancient order of the White Robe." The p-c heads to a Shaolin sanctuary, but Fang Tu isn't about to let the issue rest. In an act of melodramatic villainy, the warlord makes it known that he is going to kill everyone in his domain if the remaining mask section is not returned to him.

The p-c's mentor, Kai, provides a way out: Battle and defeat each of Fang Tu's three sub-bosses, his eight bodyguards and ultimately, Fang Tu himself. (He is a monk who has spent most of his life in spiritual and intellectual contemplation, and the best solution he can come up with is to beat the crap out of all the bad guys?)

DP's DigiChrome full-motion video (FMV) system is amazingly good, given the limitations of the Sega CD, but players who've seen the latest rev of 32X Sega CD games, such as **Digital's Corpse Killers**, may be a bit spoiled at this point.

Supreme Fighter's visual presentation resembles a more colorful, kung-fu version of the earlier Sega CD release, **Prize Fighter**. Unlike that black-and-white game, however, **Supreme Fighter's** primary display window is much larger. Also, the game's fighting style is as different from **Prize Fighter's** offensive-juggernaut technique (with players following on-screen cues that flash when the opponent is vulnerable) as the classic martial arts are from American-style pugilism.

Supreme Fighter is the first fighting game to place greater emphasis on defense than offense. In this game, the ability to throw killer blows and fatality strikes is considerably blunted if the player-character isn't equally skilled at blocking an opponent's onslaught.

The fighting is viewed first-person, but once a specialty move has been successfully executed by the player, they get to see the camera pull back and watch both fighters in action as the cut scene of the special strike is played.

Nobody is better at executing real-time action in home system FMV-based games than Digital Pictures, and while **Supreme Warrior** will frustrate many players—even street fighting vets—because of its non-traditional presentation, anyone up to the challenge will experience an exotic and truly unusual game experience. ■ (Bill Kunkel)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Digital Pictures
SYSTEM: Sega CD
THEME: Fighting
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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LET IT BURN, BABY, BURN

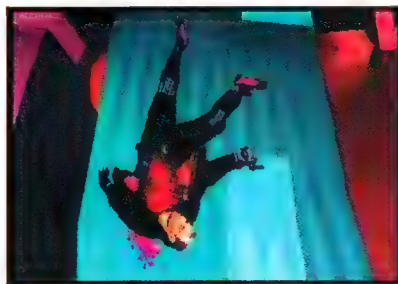
Burn: Cycle is all style and sizzle, but what style!

You are a software thief, another piece of Eurotrash flotsam living in one more imitation *Blade Runner* future, and you're trapped when a job goes awry.

That's the rather intriguing plot of Tripmedia's **Burn: Cycle** for the CD-i, a hot-looking but shal-

low bit of cyberhip fluff with elements of **Doom**, **Lethal Enforcers** and **Myst** tossed in for seasoning.

As the game begins, players awaken inside Softech Corp., a huge technoglomerate. It is not a warm and fuzzy awakening; the player-character was right in the middle of ripping off some



valuable software when a power spike zapped him (or her) into unconsciousness. When they awaken, they find themselves seated in front of a monitor which reads: **Burn: Cycle**. Beside the monitor sits a strap-on HUD that the p-c can don in order to establish contact with Kris, an accomplice who can help get them out of Softech safely.

The action then continues to the Lifter Pad, with occasional interruptions as guards appear who must be eliminated promptly through a targeting cursor-based play mechanic, strongly reminiscent of a slowed-down version of **Lethal Enforcers**.

Kris, unfortunately, turns out to be less help than expected; after setting a time bomb, the p-c heads through the Lifter Pad door and stumbles across her

lifeless, digitized body. After removing several key items from her corpse, the player moves into the Lifter aircraft, setting up a first-person dogfight encounter with Softech security forces.

True to the strongly linear nature of **Burn: Cycle**, no matter how well the player does, the Lifter winds up in the street, where the player can visit a limited number of RPG-standard locales (a bar, a church, a hotel, etc.), each of which contains some sort of game-related challenge. For example, the Karmic Church contains a hexagon puzzle; in

BLEAK METROPOLIS

It's hard to know which artistic creations will leave the deepest imprint. When Warner Bros. released director Ridley Scott's neo-film noir sci-fi cult classic, *Blade Runner*, in 1982, no one expected it to be the next *Star Wars*. Scott's vision was too dark to score big-time. But hardcore film fans were enraptured by the movie's storyline (based on the book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick) and by its imagery.

The idea of futuristic cities comprising vast TV screens that fill the industrial sky above a horrific urban ghetto, which seems the central visual inspiration for **Burn: Cycle** (and so many other games) was literally born on Doug Trumbull's sets for *Blade Runner*.

the Sum Zero Bar (see, we told you the game was hip), the p-c can opt to try his/her hand at Psychic Roulette (an interesting but only marginally entertaining strategy contest played against a prefab gamer), while the Hotel holds a com device called the Guard Box that the players must break into with their handy-dandy decoder card.

The game continues in a straightforward fashion, with the player dragged through the plot line's bottlenecks with disturbing regularity. At each location, the player must either solve a puzzle, compete in a strategy contest or face guards. (The action sequences have an extremely slow response time.)

The plot, however, quickly becomes cybersurreal as corny metaphysics come to dominate the proceedings. The player journeys into the Televerse and visits Nirvana, where Sound Sculptures and Buddhas appear and the puzzles, while essentially the same, are given a lot of faux-philosophical weight. It will probably surprise no one to learn that the game climaxes with a scenario dubbed Kill Everybody and a non-interactive coda.

The game's look is all brash colors and sassy graphics, but the digitized characters often have a flat, overly two-dimensional look. In fact, when the player comes upon Kris' dead body early in the game, she looks more folded than crumpled.

Unfortunately, no matter how cool the game looks, it doesn't stick to the ribs. The puzzles are pallid, the action games awkward and the heavy metal metaphysics can't disguise any of it.

Nonetheless, it's encouraging to see any publisher give a game as superficially cutting edge as **Burn: Cycle** the push that Philips has, with not just heavy print and marketing support, but a major television campaign. They probably should have waited for **Chaos Control**, which looks like a legitimate breakthrough (and, unfortunately, also requires the MPEG peripheral to run), but life isn't perfect, and *Wired* was more likely to cover a game with cyberpunk overtones than a revolutionary-looking shooter, anyway.

Burn: Cycle is no revolution, but its subject matter is timely, it has an interesting look, and it's an overall plus for the CD-i. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Philips
SYSTEM: CD-I
THEME: Action RPG
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 31

SPACE PIRATES™

Planet-hopping pirates lead by the scourge of the universe, the evil Captain Talon, have captured a ship of innocent space colonists. The player, a Star Ranger, must save the colonists and head off Talon's plans to rule the universe. The player will face hordes of pirates in an effort to collect energy crystals from a variety of worlds. The crystals power the star splitter cannon, the only weapon that can blast Talon and his misfits into another galaxy. **Space Pirates** is a fast-paced adventure with bonus targets hidden throughout the game.



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AN ULTIMA WORLD REVISITED

Join the Avatar in a *Savage Empire*

Dinosaurs grew in popularity as *Jurassic Park* made its way to the big screen and a certain purple saurian ruled PBS and kideo sales. *Savage Empire* is a game that got its start in the PC market as the first **Worlds of Ultima** game in the spin-off series from the numbered

Ultima adventures by Origin. It takes place in a primordial time when dinosaurs still ruled the Earth and a variety of tribal cultures dotted the land.

FCI picked a great time to revive this underrated game and make it more accessible for SNES owners. It is a solid RPG that works better in its current form than its original PC environment.

The game begins as the Avatar, the persona controlled by the player in every *Ultima* game, finds himself in the world known as Eodon, where dinosaurs roam the jungles and plains alongside such normal creatures as parrots and jaguars. The Avatar finds that he has been transported by Lord British to Eodon to solve some unknown problem through the use of his moonstones.

In Eodon, the player finds Jimmy Malone, an eager reporter; Professor



Rafkin, an archaeologist and a strange woman. The object is to find exactly what is wrong in Eodon and travel back to the Avatar's home world.

Those players who have tried other RPGs on the SNES will adapt to **Savage Empire's** interface quickly. In the top left corner of the screen, a row of hearts indicates the player's strength. Its length will increase as the player earns more experience. In the top right corner a count of emeralds represents how much "money" a player has amassed in Eodon. The emeralds are good in trade with the various cultures in the game.

The inventory and spell interfaces are also logical and make use of the SNES controller's extra keys. Each of the four main buttons performs a certain action on an inventory item. During game play, these same four buttons activate certain commands, such as use of a weapon or retrieval of an object.

A combination of three totems (human, gorilla or jaguar skull) and three substances (chocolatl, pinde or yopo) makes a spell. There are nine possible combinations. Players can assign a spell to the left button and right button

on the controller. As the game goes on, the most effective spells to assign will become obvious.

There are enough creatures in Eodon to keep a player busy for a long time, but it makes more sense to ignore many of the weaker creatures later in the game. The variety of dinosaurs includes the Pteranodon, Dimetrodon and Tyrannosaurus Rex. Other creatures (the gorilla, parrot or jaguar) help develop the game's jungle environment. There are many benefits in tackling the more ferocious animals, so players should run away from these more powerful creatures only until they have enough experience and hearts to fight a more even battle.

The various cultures in Eodon will help players once they solve certain miniquests and retrieve items for them. The people of Eodon are as interesting as the fauna. These include: the Aztec-like Nahuatla, the black Yolaru and the high-altitude Barrab. The manual provides descriptions of the cultures that provide clues about their purpose in the adventure. If players get to know both the fauna and the people of Eodon, they can attain the overall goal more easily.

The graphics in *Savage Empire* represent Eodon in an overhead view with a jungle palette of colors and elements. Branches, vines, crude structures and jungle environments define the game. The graphics are like those in many other RPGs of this type and get the job done without being too fancy. The sound effects and music make the game exciting. The animals' sounds and the tribal rhythms are matched perfectly to the action and game play.

Savage Empire doesn't deserve awards for its visual and audio effects, but they fit with the style of the game.

Savage Empire is a nice diversion from the traditional fantasy RPGs and monster-dominated, hell-based environments where many of today's RPGs take place. It is nice to finally have a game without the usual assortment of wizards, demons or knights. The jungle environment is a fresh location to cast spells and juggle artifacts and other items in a quest to save a land overrun by predators and creatures in the distant past. ■ (Russ Ceccola)



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: FCI
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: RPG
MEGABITS: 24
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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RACING 'ROUND THE 3DO

Road & Track—The Need For Speed

There are two kinds of gamers. In one camp, there are racing game fans, in another camp ... everybody else. **Road & Track—The Need for Speed** is an exercise in muscle-machine fantasy fulfillment that is likely to swell the ranks of the racing game camp with newcomers.

The Need for Speed (NFS) pulls all the elements together: fast graphics, a realistic physics model, slick video and a competent computer-controlled opponent. **NFS** is another in a series of recent titles that serves as proof positive that 3DO remains the hottest platform out there.

The premise in **NFS** is straightforward. The player can choose from any of eight "supercars" and race them along at homicidal speeds. The supercars include the Lamborghini Diablo VT, Dodge Viper RT/10, Chevrolet Corvette ZR-1, Mazda RX-7, Ferrari 512TR, Porsche 911, Acura NSX and even the tamer Toyota Supra Turbo.

Road & Track has provided accurate performance statistics for each of these beasts based on **Road & Track's** independent road tests.

Color commentary about each of the cars is also provided, along with plenty of montage video shots. Three scenic routes include City, Alpine and Coastal, with three tracks each for a total of nine race courses.

All of the racing is done in the real world—this isn't about a run-of-the-mill, circular race track! Players need to learn to avoid running head-on into a minivan while simultaneously avoiding the ubiquitous police cruisers and their time-consuming tickets.

The player can race against the clock or against a computer-controlled opponent. After each race the opponent appears in video clips and hurls compliments or insults depending

on the player's success. The nameless video opponent is heavy on machismo clichés, but manages not to be too annoying even after time.

There are numerous options to select, including three skill levels, the most difficult of which allows players to manually shift gears—a preferable mode for any serious performance driver.

Players can enable or disable any of the features of their current car, such as ABS or traction control. The player can not only select which car to drive, but also select the opponent's car. Selecting the same car for both will give players a sense of how much time they could save off the line if they could shift with computer accuracy! The player can select from a variety of controller configurations, though the default layout proves highly likable. If the opponent video is tiresome, the extensive controls even let the player ax the color commentary.

Visually, **NFS** is top-notch. The development team at Pioneer Productions seems to have built on the 3-D

models, to the tight, accurate cornering of the Porsche 911. The smaller cars like the 911 will catch air if the player crests a hill too aggressively, while the big Corvette ZR-1 hugs the same hill at the same speed, its virtual girth keeping it in place. Even during the inevitable crashes, the cars fly about realistically, flipping end over end in some cases and even rolling down hills.

Players can identify a passing strategy in part by watching the brakelights of cars ahead. Oncoming traffic honks in alarm when a player swings into their path of motion, and the radar detector is a functioning tool in the overall game



instead of window dressing. Details like these have the collective effect of making a potentially tedious racing game into a highly addictive pastime.

The only problem with a game like **NFS** is that it can leave a player demanding even more. For example, the spectacularly violent collisions result in cars turned every which way, but then ... only wisps of smoke. A little fragmentation and the occasional, incendiary incident would have jacked up the consequences of those high-speed mishaps.

Also, the game needs more courses. **NFS** is good enough to merit a sequel, but if the issue was memory, the players would have been well served with far less video and far more of the beautiful scenery—if only to pass it in a blur! It's also a shame that a split-screen, two-player mode was not incorporated—this game cries out for head-to-head play.

In all, **The Need for Speed** is a high-horsepower racing treat that will please motorheads and non-motorheads alike. Players who have never believed that trying to go really fast from one point to another could prove entertaining should check this game out.

For the motorhead, three words for you: Get it now. ■ (Dave Gerding)



visualization engine used for 3DO's **Road Rash**—the **Road Rash** team is referenced within **NFS**' game credits. **NFS** seems to do more with the engine than did **Road Rash**.

Multiple camera views, including a Heli-Cam with an instant-replay feature, let players experience the race from different angles, though the in-car view is where most gamers will spend the bulk of the race. **NFS**' graphics engine uses texture bitmaps instead of the polygons used in games like **Virtua Racer**, so the scenery and competition appear much more organic and lifelike.

NFS really succeeds because of its attention to detail and realism. Even novices will notice right away that each of the cars has unique road handling and feel, from some fishtailing in the bigger



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
SYSTEM: 3DO
THEME: Highway Racing
MEGABITS: N/A
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 3 routes, 9 tracks

JALECO Scores Again



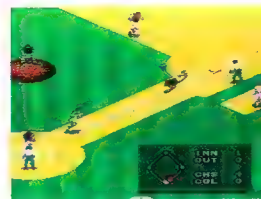
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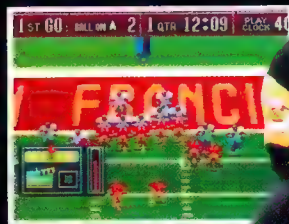
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THE FINAL GRADE

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.

	Andy Katz EDITOR	Mark Cuban SENIOR EDITOR	Bill Kunkel EXECUTIVE EDITOR	Steve Kotler L.A. TIMES
Aerobiz Supersonic	B+	A-	B	-
Alien vs. Predator	A-	B	A	A-
Adv. of Batman	B-	C	C+	B
Blackthorn	B+	B	B+	-
Boogerman	B-	C-	B	C
Bubsy II	A-	B	B+	-
Cadillacs/Dinosaurs	C+	C+	B-	D-
Demolition Man	A	A-	A	B
Demon's Crest	B+	A-	A	B+
Donkey Kong Country	A+	A+	A+	A+
Dynamite Headdy	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 (3DO)	B-	C+	B	C+
Illusion of Gaia	B+	B	A	B+
Indiana Jones G.A.	B	B-	B	-
Iron Soldier	A-	-	A	B+
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	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
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
Unracers	A-	A	A	A
Vay	C+	B	B	-
Voyeur (CD-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



Great space combat can be experienced on the SNES with Wing Commander II.

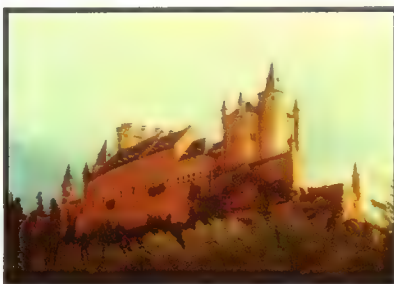
Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story (Atari/Jaguar) This one- or two-player fighting game is unique, in that it has



intelligence and an actual plot: Like the movie, it's a combat intensive retelling of Bruce Lee's life. Battle Mode is a more straightforward fight but still full of surprises and unique touches. The Chi (inner strength) meter adds a touch of magic to a cart that doesn't need four-armed monsters or energy bolts to be a standout fighting game. Bruce has a broad range of kicks, punches and blocks; building up enough Chi lets him use Nunchuckas on his opponents. The 'chucks fly around quite convincingly. The really cool death sequence in Story Mode gives Bruce a chance to fight death and return to the land of the living. Recommended to Jaguar owners.

B+ (John W. Hardin)

Don Quixote (Pioneer/LaserActive) This wide-sweeping adventure stars Don Quixote as the knight he wished he was, on a quest to rescue the Princess Dulcinea from the man who murdered her father and stole the crystals of Truth and Justice. The opening sets the scene with wonderful music and filmed images of Spain, intercut with anime-style animation. However, once the game begins, it's minimal animation and fake first-person 3-D movement through maze-like towns and landscapes whose features are repeated loops. Completing



the quest is a matter of finding and using items with few or no clues; even weapons get only one use and they're gone. Yes-and-no decisions drive the game. Give this one a no. **F** (Ross Chamberlain)

Corpse Killers (Digital Pictures/Sega 32X) Tom Zito is a magician, the man

who created Digital Pictures and has pioneered the cutting edge of FMV-based video entertainment since the mid-'80s.

No one has more imaginatively exploited this difficult format and DP has produced games on the humble Sega CD that could teach the big-budget PC-CD guys a thing or three about interactive movies. Unfortunately, in **Corpse Killers**, Zito's usually reliable imagination fails him and he settles for a C-grade monster duckshoot. The player is involved in an endless lock-and-load cycle, aiming and firing at



shambling, levitating zombies in between well-staged cut scenes.

Corpse Killers, much like its stars, is a brainless twitch game. **F** (Bill Kunkel)

Bubsy In: Fractured Furry Tales

(Atari/Jaguar) Video gaming's favorite feline's first Jag outing is bound to



disappoint Bubsy buffs. The 15 levels span five different fairytale and fantasy worlds from Alice in Wonderland to Bubsy & Gretel. Unfortunately, the graphics are very disappointing and do not utilize the Jag's vaunted capabilities. The game control is also quirky, with Bubsy dying when nothing is near him or falling into an area that is insurmountable. The soundtrack is abominable and not even the whimsical sound effects help. Bubsy once asked, in his first adventure, "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?" Now the feline's fans know the answer. **F** (Laurie Yates)

Jeopardy! (Sony-Imagesoft/Sega CD)

Nothing new here. The graphics keep getting better, and the largely digitized presentation seems more than ever like a real TV game show—except for one thing. The *same* thing that has killed

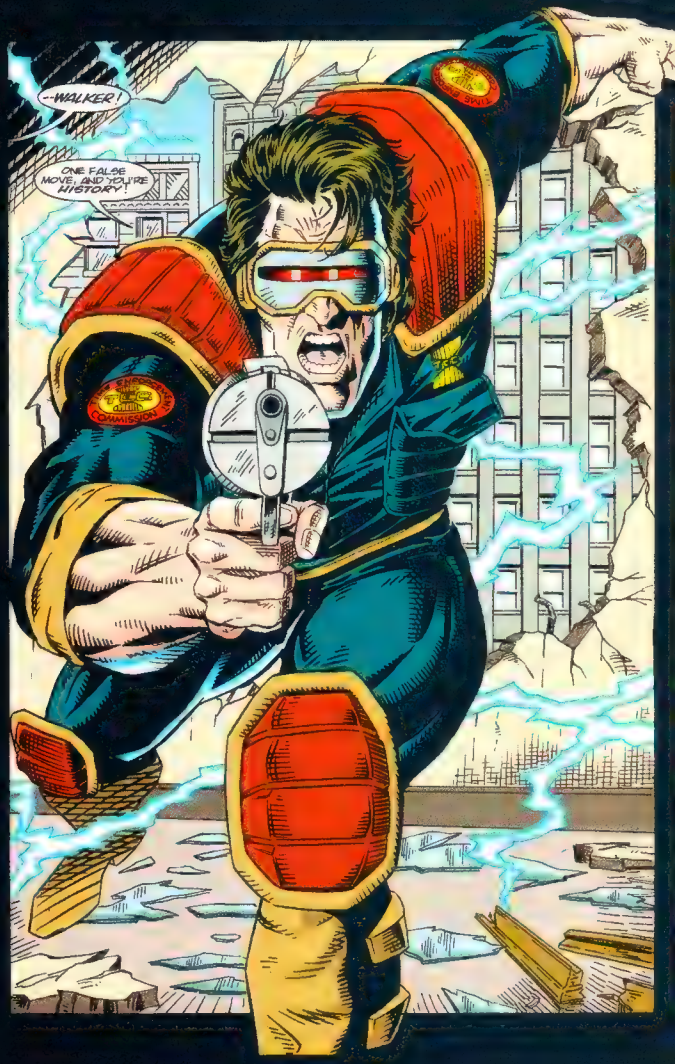
You can either save history or be history.

TIMECOP

Excuse me... Do you know what year it is? Just like the comic and the movie, TIMECOP the new action game puts you in the midst of time travel to eliminate your enemies that have traveled in time before you. Enjoy the many challenging stages of time travel that are offered. And remember, don't die, but if you do make sure it's not before the date you were born. Coming soon to Super NES and Sega CD.



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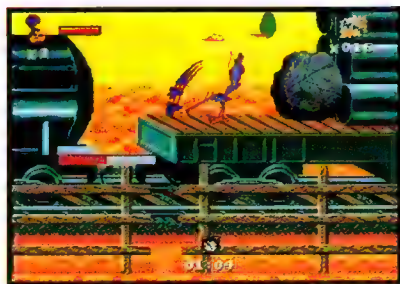
SEGA CD™



every version of this game since Gametek first brought it to the NES (and even, heaven help us, the Game Boy!) nearly a decade ago: Video game systems don't have keyboards. There are few things in gaming that are less entertaining than entering multiword, non-multiple choice answers through a keypad controller.

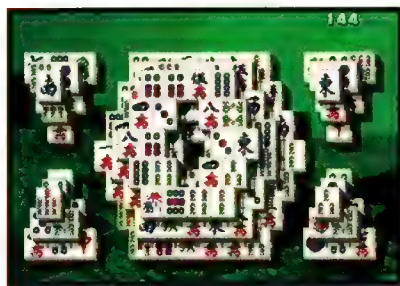
And it doesn't help that the computerized contestants often seem dumber than salt. **C+** (Bill Kunkel)

Desert Demolition (Sega/Genesis) The subtitle is "Starring Road Runner & Wile E. Coyote" and sure enough, it's a Warner Bros. cartoon, complete with traps, cliffs and lots of exercise. The difference is that the player can take the part of either Wile E. Coyote or Road Runner. After that, it's pretty much



standard side-scroller stuff, with special moves for each character. There are power-ups and collectibles that either can take advantage of, but Road Runner must avoid Acme boxes, while Wile E. finds a surprise in each one—often helpful, if he can control it. Regrettably, there's no two-player option. **B** (Ross Chamberlain)

Shanghai: Triple Threat (Activision/3DO) The ancient Chinese tile game makes its first appearance on an upper-end console system. With three ways to play (Solitaire, Two-Player "Pandemonium" or Arcade), gamers are sure to find



a strategy setup they like. Gamers, take note: The two-player version pits the players on-screen simultaneously. The FMV openings are incredibly beautiful, but the tile graphics are muddy and the animations are uninspired. The music tracks are more invigorating than soothing, but the sound effects are interesting.

The presentation is disappointing, but the game is still great. **B** (Laurie Yates)

True Lies (LJN/SNES) It's a shooter, as Harry Tasker, a squat little Schwarzenegger clone, tromps with guns a-blazing



through miles of maze-like lawns and corridors, shopping malls and subway tracks. Innocent bystanders mostly ignore the hail of bullets but do get in Tasker's way, and dropped baddies bleed and dissolve into the three-quarter overhead view landscape. Harry has all kinds of weapons to use and other items lying around to pick up, along with several missions to accomplish, in order to save the U.S. from atomic annihilation (and his wife and daughter from a dire fate) at the hands of the Crimson Jihad. It's fun, and the puzzle aspects aren't too frustrating. **B** (Ross Chamberlain)

Might and Magic III: The Isles of Terra (FCI/SNES) This installment of the M&M series has enough combat action to keep avid hack-and-slash fans happy. Players guide the premade party out into the hostile countryside, or assemble their own party from Rangers, Paladins, Clerics, Druids, Ninjas, Archers, Sorcerers, Knights, Barbarians and Robbers. If the orcs and goblins don't get them, the skeletons and bubble men will. Players die dismayingly fast against even the most low-level monsters. The perspective is the classic first-person used in every RPG since **Wizardry**. There is a wide range of magic spells for the player to access, and a large virtual countryside to explore. While M&M III is not exactly the most innovative game, it is a solid and absorbing RPG. Role-playing fans should check it out. **B** (John W. Hardin)

Rise of the Phoenix (Koei/SNES) This latest strategy game from Koei covers the turbulent civil war in China's history from August 206 B.C. to December 203 B.C. In interface, it is very similar to the **Romance of the Three Kingdoms** games. The player takes the role of legendary leader Xiang Yu or Liu Bang. As the game progresses in week- and month-long turns, the player must build up his influence, conduct diplomatic affairs, manage resources and wage war.

There can be only one emperor of China, and it's up to the player to determine who wins. This is a strategy game, what Koei is best at. Worth a look for strategy fans. **B+** (John W. Hardin)

Wing Commander II: Vengeance of the Kilrathi (FCI/SNES) **Wing Commander II** reproduces all of the major features of the popular space combat game. SNES players will find the cinematics and fast action they expect, as well as the multiple plot lines and variety of space ships and weapons amazingly stuffed into a game cartridge. The only problem with the system is that it is tough to control the space ships with a game pad. The **Wing Commander** series really works best with a joystick. Still, **Wing Commander II** has enough missions, difficult space battles and surprise plot twists to inspire players to master the game controls so they can take on the feline Kilrathi race and save mankind. **B-** (Russ Ceccola)

Troy Aikman NFL Football (Williams/Jaguar) The first real football game for the Jag (the only other is **Brutal Sports Football**, a Mutant League-like stinker)



is not a crushing disappointment, but it's not **Madden Football** either. NFL teams are on hand, but there's no NFLPA license, so Aikman is the only real player, but given the superficial stat base of this game, it hardly matters. The game's most unique feature is its large player sprites, but during play, the characters tend to blur together. Also, the program's AI stinks; any player who can't score at least three points on every possession isn't trying. **C+** (Bill Kunkel)

Road Rash 3: Tour de Force (Electronic Arts/Genesis) "Ooop! Aagh! Unnh!" These are the sounds players make when playing **Road Rash 3**. More specifically, when their motorcycles collide head-on with trucks, cows and police cars—only a few of the obstacles on the hard road to victory in **RR3**. To help gamers out, a large selection of weapons is available, from chains, to mace, to cattle prods. Fun stuff! The soundtrack is great, and the graphics are more than adequate. Electronic Arts scores again. **A+** (John W. Hardin)



One way, or another, you'll go...

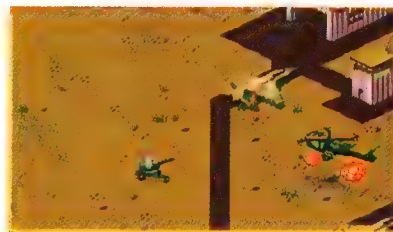
Ballistic

Whatever the landscape, it's all deadly ground when you take on the maniacs of **Desert Strike** and its nerve-racking sequel, **Jungle Strike**.

In **Desert Strike**, Middle East madman General Kilbaba has put the whole world on the brink of war. You must fly a series of missions in your **Apache Attack** Helicopter and stop him using canons, **Hydras**, and **Hellfire** missiles. Choose your co-pilot and patrol a real-time world in this action-packed thriller right out of the headlines.



Jungle Strike takes place after the



death of General Kilbaba. His son, Kilbaba the Younger, has joined forces with the world's most **powerful** drug lord in a quest for **vengeance** against the United States. You'll operate a Comanche **Attack** Helicopter, F-117A Stealth Fighter, MX9 **Attack** Hover craft and a Special Forces **Assault**

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or another you'll go **ballistic**.

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SimTower is super—the subject is not

After creating the world and modifying evolution, restructuring life, building and destroying the ultimate city and getting the trains to run on time, what's a simulator aficionado to do?

Move up, of course.

SimTower, Maxis' latest simulation, gives players the opportunity to build and manage all the complex, interconnected operations of a modern skyscraper. As the owner and general manager, the gamer soon learns that all of the SimTenants, from office workers to shoppers, have places to be and things to do, with time a very real factor in determining macro-success or failure.

Like its counterparts in the SimLine, **SimTower** strenuously requires gamers to consider both psychological and physical balance. Each locale—office, restaurant, condo or cathedral—has a state of being that reflects the stress level of its individual tenants.

Thus it is up to the general manager to keep people happy. As long as people are happy, the user can upgrade the building, increase the number of tenants and with skill, the building status will rise from one star to five, whereupon the gamer controls the ultimate skyscraper, and may want to try his/her

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Maxis
DESIGNER: Voot Salto
SYSTEM: Macintosh
THEME: Simulation
HD SPACE: 4
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

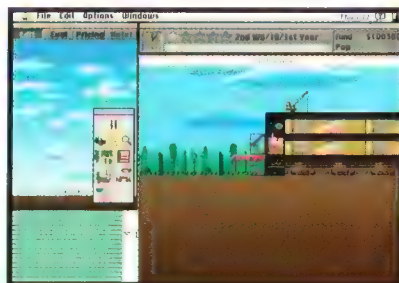
hand at becoming the next Donald Trump or Steve Wynn.

Players begin the process by planning out the lobby area. The length that the lobby icon is dragged across the screen is very important, since the whole structure can be no wider than its base. Once that's in place, the real planning begins.

What comes next? With a nascent tower, players have only a few options: Install offices, create condos and open restaurants. The restaurant selections aren't really selectable. The first structure at this point is always Japanese, the second is always Chinese and the third is a burger place. Somehow, it's hard to feel that this really expresses the breadth of American dining, even granting that the more elegant eateries should be confined to the upper floors. A key

component in all successful Sim products is user flexibility: once the designers start making choices for the user, a sim tends to head in a bad direction. Nonetheless, despite the limited menu, people still have to eat. So, put in a bank of elevators, a couple of well-placed escalators, and hungry people will come.

And people *being* people, they will complain ... and whine ... and bellyache. As a good landlord, with the ultimate ambition of raising a magnificent 100-story tower (complete with cathedral!),



the player wants to know about these complaints. In a twist right out of *Sliver*, any location that is clicked on with the magnifying glass pops up on a Facility Screen. Gamers will hear, for example,

-muted office activity in the background and see the type of operation that occupies the space under scrutiny (i.e., Third Floor Office). Each such intervention generates a pop-up window including renderings of all the workers in that



location, as well as the Eval line. This color bar graph reports the collective attitude in the facility being examined. If it's blue, everything is running smoothly; if it's red, the time has come for evaluation.

Speaking of evaluation, it's hard to believe that Maxis allowed this game to be released without a time accelerator function. The tedium could be greatly relieved if the player could fast forward occasionally through the rudimentary stages. Heck, there aren't even any pre-constructed Towers, another serious violation of the Maxis Sim tradition.

But to answer the question that's probably on the minds of all Sim-fans: yes, there *are* disaster scenarios (a fire and terrorist bomb threats). The fires occur only after the structure has enough people in it that could cause carelessness—in this case, a three-star rating (a system similar to that used in restaurant and hotel guides). The bomb threats begin with a two-star rating and won't cease until the player reaches the magical, perfect five-star rating.

The terrorist attack, while random, will always culminate at 1:00 p.m. Security guards can swarm the building, but only from the emergency stairwells. Incredibly, security may not use any elevators, an incredible breach of realism.

The fire emergency, meanwhile, can start anywhere at anytime. Fires can be dealt with in one of two ways. First, gamers may elect to have the security staff contain the blaze. Their effectiveness is dependent upon their proximity. The second and obvious choice: Dial 911, deducting \$300,000 from the operating budget.

It is obvious that this series has begun to stray from the essential vision that made *SimCity* the great game it still is. Once a developer has engine elements that work, it's folly to discard them, especially when their application seems so incredibly apt.

So many elements in the game design are arbitrary, even ridiculous. Imagine

security forces that aren't permitted to use their own elevators—even when the building is under terrorist attack! This is clearly a non-realistic element that was introduced solely for the convenience of the designer, who knows that security troops are mobile and wants to force the user to deploy troops on every floor for *game* reasons.

Then, of course, there is the concept of building a cathedral, no less, inside a business tower. Of course, this same tower contains everything from businesses to condos to movie theaters, in a one-building melting pot that would cause a real-world zoning inspector to have a stroke. This cathedral idea, however, is simultaneously profane, ridiculous and entirely alien to the experience of anyone likely to use *SimTower*. The Judeo-Christian and other Western religions weren't big on building huge houses of worship in malls, shopping centers or skyscrapers, last we heard.



The restaurants lose \$3,000 per day if they serve fewer than 22 people per day and they always make \$5,000 per day for more than 35 people. There is also no player control over the hours that the restaurants are open.

The condos all cost the same,

ELEVATOR MADNESS

SimTower's elevators stem from creator Yoot Saito's curiosity.

"The elevators in some buildings frustrate me terribly, and those in others don't—even when they have the same number of cars and floors Inefficient elevators and their resulting frustrations are serious problems for business people, but nobody knows enough about the subject to know if anything is really wrong, much less who to complain to.

"[After discovering no one was willing to reveal the secrets of elevators,] my partner and programmer [Takumi] Abe and I discovered why there weren't books on the subject: Elevator movements, like the steps of a dance, are almost impossible to describe with mere words."

But it might now be easier to complain about them. ("Bad flow rate!")



regardless of the floors on which they are placed. In reality, the higher up the condo, the more expensive. It also isn't possible to change the sale price.

Graphically, *SimTower* is non-inspiring. The sunrises are pretty, but the offices, condos, etc., are visual cookie-cutter images (although the "doll-house style" cutaway view *is* interesting). The people are identical, and too small to appear as anything more than indistinct shapes, unless they're on the escalators or queuing for the elevator. On the early levels, the sole excitement involves watching elevators go up and down.

The sound effects (drone of people moving, phones ringing, elevators clanging) will drive you mad. Fortunately, they can be toggled off.

SimTower's game mechanics are a definite drawback. Most of the "psychological balance" is arbitrary—there isn't any way to explain why two out of three condo dwellers are thriving while the third is going through a breakup.

This is truly a game about motion. Can you keep people moving? What is the best placement for a bank of elevators? When and where are the traffic patterns the heaviest or lightest? Is there a waiting floor? Are the "sky lobbies" placed appropriately? And so on.

Ironically, for all of its motion realism (waiting periods, elevator flow patterns, etc.), *SimTower* won't permit a standard coupling of an express elevator with a bank of standard elevators; yet this is frequently done in real buildings.

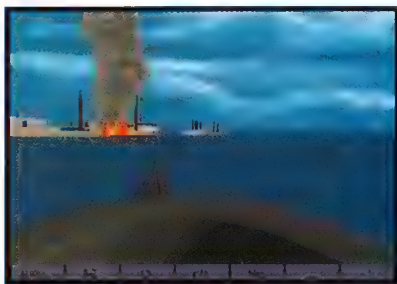
The real fun occurs after the Tower has been upgraded and players can add the more esoteric items. This does take time, though. Gaining a second star requires a minimum Tower population of 300; while the third star demands 1,000 tenants and the placement of more than one security office. The fourth star is available after reaching 5,000 people, building more than one suite, meeting recycling and medical demands and the visiting VIP rates the building favorably. The fifth star maintains the previous standards, and a metro station must be added. For Ultimate Tower status, a \$3 million dollar cathedral must be built.

Sorry, legions of Sim fans, but unfortunately, it looks like Maxis is moving toward *SimBurnout*. **B-** (Laurie Yates)

ALARM! ALL HANDS FORWARD!

Join the German U-boat fleet in *Aces of the Deep*

History records that 40,000 men served aboard German U-boats during WWII, 30,000 of whom never returned. Believed intrinsically evil by some, U-boats wreaked havoc on Allied ship-



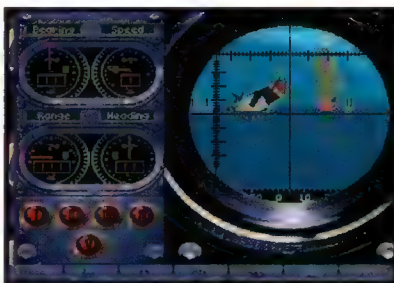
ping early in the war only to be similarly victimized by Allied technology as the war progressed. **Aces of the Deep (AOD)** puts players in command of a Type II, Type VII or Type IX German U-boat and sends them off to hunt Allied convoys in the frigid and often deadly North Atlantic waters. The premise is simple: Maneuver the U-boat into position and sink enemy ships while evading escorting warships. As captain, intricate details of U-boat operation (such as holding the dive plane trim tabs, opening and closing hatches, etc.) are handled by the computerized crew rather than the player. The captain may order a particular type of torpedo loaded in a particular torpedo tube but the computerized crew handles the many details of executing that order.

The captain, using the mouse and hot keys, controls or communicates with every major ship function expected from a military simulation: sound room, radio room, engines, helm and torpedo room, while monitoring the tactical situation from the bridge, periscope or map. Time compression eases the burden of tedious maneuvering somewhat; nonetheless **AOD** demands considerable attention and tactical savvy. Oxygen supplies limit dive times, submerged maneuvering depletes batteries, running on the surface replenishes batteries but leaves the U-boat vulnerable to enemy attack. Fledgling torpedo technology seriously limits attack options requiring a careful plan of attack followed by lengthy maneuvers. Pushing a faulty or bad attack typically results in a sunken U-boat while even the best-planned attacks

often fall victim to occasional dud torpedoes.

As the name implies, **AOD** is an extension of the **Aces** series of flight simulators and therefore uses a similar menuing interface. As with all **Aces** titles, the player may re-enact a historical engagement, play a single mission or enter a campaign. In campaign play, the player must additionally manage supplies (generically lumped together as "fuel") along with torpedoes, and determine when to return to port. Campaigns range through the war years, allowing players to roam virtually unchallenged through the North Atlantic in 1940 or struggle to survive in 1943.

Sound effects are industry standard, including an assortment of digitized voices speaking either English or German. The graphics, utilizing the standard **Aces** graphics engine, lack the resolution of contemporary CD-ROM games. Niceties such as water sheathing



over the periscope lens, excellent wave motion and astronomical movements make the product graphically entertaining while the coarse resolution and resultant visibility reduction complicates target identification and attack. While sufficient for this application, the **Aces** graphical engine definitely shows its age and noticeably pales compared to **U.S. Navy Fighters**.

Dynamix didn't forget the antagonistic North Atlantic environment. Weather significantly affects tactical operations, especially fog. Often, virtual U-boat captains find themselves trailing a convoy by running submerged at slow speeds during the day, then surfacing and closing under the cover of night. The U-boat's slow submerged speed causes it to lose ground during the tactical movements of the day runs. If fog or storms move in while the U-boat lags

the convoy, the player may lose sight and the convoy slips away.

While providing reasonable technical accuracy for a simulation of this type, **AOD** excels with historical authenticity. From the music selections available in the U-boat's sound room to tactical operations, **AOD** superbly suspends disbelief. Allied and German technology advance as the war progresses, often leaving the player wondering whether a depth charge hit was random bad luck or the result of a dedicated destroyer well aware of the U-boat's position. During WWII, no one who took a submarine deep enough to find "crush depth" lived to report what that depth was. Subsequently, **AOD** significantly varies crush depth between missions to prevent players from discovering the U-boat's limitations and unrealistically exploiting them in alternate "lives."

The artificial intelligence, especially late in the war when armed with radar and other advances, can be quite challenging. The surface vessels operate with individual AI under the command of a "group" intelligence. This combination of individuals working toward a common goal (sinking the player's U-boat) make for interesting challenges.

AOD's multimedia section is a mixed bag containing historical overviews, game play tips, videos of surviving U-boat captains, maps and U-boat diagrams. Some items, such as maps and parts of the tutorial seem a bit sparse, while other items excel. The historical readings on U-boat operations are superb, but the multimedia interviews with eight surviving U-boat captains steal the show. Each of the eight included captains discuss U-boat operations and tactical dilemmas in three-to-five minute video clips.

Creating an atmosphere straight from the movie *Das Boot*, **AOD** successfully pulls the player into a virtual world filled with U-boats, merchant ships, destroyers and tense German submariners. Careless players will find themselves stuck in mud on the sea floor near crush depth, watching the oxygen supply decrease and listening to the hull moan under the pressure as the chief engineer tries to enact repairs that might surface the wounded ship. **B+** (Tom Basham)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Dynamix
DESIGNER: Mike Jones
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: WWII U-Boat Sim
HD SPACE: 200 KB-11 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A



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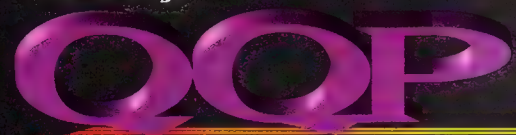
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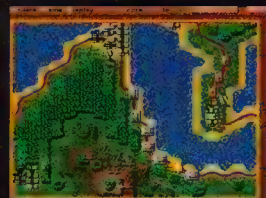
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SHOOT-'EM-UP ON A FRIGHT SHIP

Creature Shock pits players against tough aliens

Multimedia games are, by default, capable of using high-end graphics, sound effects and music to create a world in which any player can spend hours of enjoyment. But no multimedia game so far—not even **Doom II**—is as unsettling and frightening as

Creature Shock. The game feeds upon the very emotions that movies like the *Alien* trilogy and *Halloween* require to work—a base of uneasiness with continuous surprises layered on top. It is quite easy for a developer to toy with the



states of mind of players when all they know is that they will encounter monsters, but they don't know how many or what they will look like. **Creature Shock** has a large variety of monsters and a set of challenging missions to catch even the best players off guard.

The introduction and plot line involve a common science-fiction tradition—a spaceship attacked by an alien creature and a rescue team sent out to investigate. In **Creature Shock**, the rescue team is a single person, controlled by the player. The spaceship is the *Amazon*, sent on an exploratory mission from Earth to find a suitable place for mankind to continue its existence in a safe and healthy environment. The alien that attacks the spaceship is a living asteroid whose tentacles grasp the ship, but not before the captain sends out a distress beacon.

The player must carry out two types of missions in the quest for the solution to the spaceship's abduction and the alien threat. The first type is a straight shoot-'em-up that the player must survive to travel from location to location in the game. The other kind is a search for clues inside an alien outpost, coupled with combat against a variety of monsters. Although the alternating styles of game play lend some variety to **Creature Shock**, players will wish that the game consisted entirely of the Exploration Mode. It is far more enjoyable, somewhat randomized and a break for the fingers that the shoot-'em-up missions don't provide.

The first action sequence is the mission to Saturn to encounter the alien vehicle. Nothing explains why there are so many alien ships in outer space and also doesn't fit the shoot-em-up missions into the plot at all. There are too many ships, bombs and asteroids to make this mission enjoyable. Since there is no point score associated with the mission's success, there is also no incentive to do well. The only goal is survival. This is true of the other flying sequence to the alien base. This mini-game is fast paced and a little difficult, even on the Easy game play level, but fast rock music makes it tolerable.

The internal exploratory missions are not easy by any means, but they are more exciting because the monsters strewn throughout the level can pop up at any time and the graphics are completely rendered in organic patterns. The goal in the first inside level is to find the

Amazon and escape. In the second level, the object is to turn off the alien communication beacon. The third level is a complete mystery. Players move a cursor around the screen to select a path through the ship or base. A very basic map in the instruction booklet helps to find the way through the ship, but ultimately players must remember which way to turn at each junction. When monsters get close enough, the cursor will change to a crosshair that directs a blast from the player's weapon wherever it is placed on the screen.

The monsters each have their own personalities and methods of attack. After a few games, each monster's weakness is also obvious. Some monsters slide on the ground. Others hop and fire at the player. Still others fly or hover. The more difficult creatures each have some Achilles heel where players should concentrate their fire. Players will know they have found the spot when the monster recoils from a well-placed blast.

The graphics in **Creature Shock** are stunning, very slimy and organic where the creatures and interiors are concerned. Most of the monsters are quite disgusting and look like a bug held up to a magnifying glass. The scenes move past quickly, even on a single-speed CD-ROM drive. The sound effects and spooky, tense music set the mood for the entire game. When players search a corridor and hear a monster's scream from ahead, their hearts will start to race. Each monster has its own set of sound effects and music. These audio clues can help players get ready for the next attack, but only a well-placed shot will assure survival.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Virgin
DESIGNER: Argonaut Software
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Action Adventure
HD SPACE: 4 MB Min/9 MB Full
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

Creature Shock is an exciting combination of action and adventure, with the mysteries of the *Amazon's* fate and the creatures' roles in the universe driving the player to try just one more game. The first few times through, the alien ship will frustrate players to a large degree, mostly because the silk-worm creature will kill them every time until they discover its weakness. Map out the pathways and always keep that trigger finger ready. It's the best strategy to send those ugly monsters to oblivion. **B+** (Russ Ceccola)

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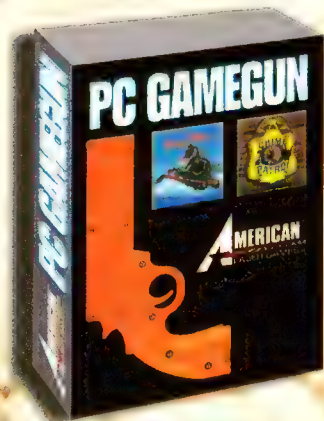


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THE VALLEY OF THE DRAGONS

Murder, battles and mystery in *Dragon Lore*

Dragons have always been part of fantasy novels and tales of heroism since stories were written. The legend of winged, fire-breathing creatures may have started with the pterodactyls, but it has grown to include all kinds of wyrm, some of which don't even breathe fire.

Dragon Lore takes the variety of dragons one might find in a fantasy role-playing, paper-and-pencil game and weaves an intricate story around their personalities and legends. *Dragon Lore* takes place in a world where dragons are respected, and magic only exists because the winged beasts allow it. Those who ride them into battle, the Dragon Knights, are highly revered.

The player begins the game as Werner von Wallenrod, an orphan who must solve the mystery of his father's murder and ultimately defeat all enemies who upset the balance of life in the Valley, which is protected from the outside world. A migration into the Valley took place long ago when the Orcs invaded the world and wanted to destroy it. The people fought alongside their patron dragons to repeal the advance of the Orcs, and retreated into the large Valley. They built tall walls to keep out the Orcs. Every now and then the Orcs sneak over the wall, but there are worse things about to happen in the Valley.

The player must explore the world of the Valley, talk to its inhabitants and ultimately reach the position of Dragon Knight. But a major obstacle to this



success is the evil that has invaded the Valley in the forms of Orcs, other monsters and the jealousy of Haagen von Diakonov, the prime suspect in von Wallenrod's murder. After a perusal of the manual, it doesn't make sense that there are so many monsters in such a peaceful valley, but the plot explains this later.

The game's interface is very simple to manipulate and fits into the game as part of the environment. A hot cursor tells the player what can happen at various locations on the screen. If the dragon cursor points to the left, the player can move in that direction. If the dragon has a ball in its mouth, the cursor is over an object that the player can use or put into the inventory. Other variations of the cursor indicate different game functions. The ESC key brings up the Main Menu and a right mouse click in the upper-left corner retrieves the inventory.

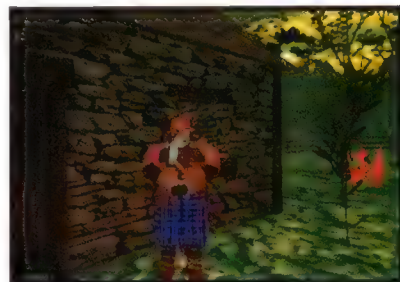
Combat takes place in the same first-person perspective view as the normal Exploration Mode. Players need to ready a weapon, shield and other protective wear in their inventory before they enter battle. It is not enough to have an object in the player's possession. It is annoying to have to ready every object for use in combat, but this is a matter of taste. Once a weapon is readied, players click the right mouse button at various locations on the screen and the weapon swings accordingly, from high to low, left to right.

The graphics in *Dragon Lore* will remind many players of *Myst*. The *Journeyman Project*, *The 7th Guest* and other photorealistic, high-detail

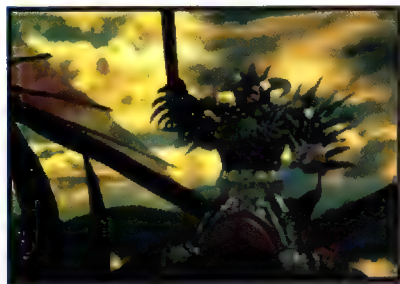
environments. The European company Cryo developed the game. Their attention to detail and high standards show throughout. A session with *Dragon Lore* is like a much more exciting trip through *Myst* or an interactive version of some of the best cinematic sequences from popular games or even computer-generated film sequences. All of this fine scenery does have its cost—players may find it difficult to configure their memory to handle *Dragon Lore* as the game requires 600K of base memory.

Dragon Lore's musical score and recorded voices take the player deeper into the medieval environment. From roars of dragons to the frenzied speech of frightened characters, *Dragon Lore* is as much a joy to hear as it is to watch. Cryo did a wonderful job of dotting the aural landscape with a variety of sound effects and now-expected speech sequences for a complete experience in the land where dragons are truly king.

Dragon Lore is a much deeper game than it initially appears because of all the plot twists and interesting characters that make the behind-the-scenes stories worthy of exposure. It encompasses such a wide variety of locations and miles of terrain that it is easy for players to get lost in the adventure environment and forget the overall goal. The variety



of the dragons themselves and the races they protect would serve as a strong base for a new world of fantasy RPGs or novels, so players should read the basic information contained in the manual to enjoy the plot and its characters fully. *Dragon Lore* is a leader in the next generation of CD-ROM games that not only layer on the speech, great graphics and special effects, but also provide a captivating story to justify these elements' placement. **A-** (Russ Ceccola)



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Mindscape
DESIGNER: Cryo
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Adventure
HD SPACE: 8 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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TANKS FOR THE MEGACORPS

Cyberpunk meets Tank Battle in *Zephyr*

A common theme of much science fiction is the cyberpunk distopia: a dark future, populated with violent thugs and amoral megacorporations bent on profit at all costs. New World Computing is out of the dungeon and into the year 2365 with its new release.

This is the latest in a long line of tank-battle sims, starting with the antediluvian arcade hit *Battlezone* and ending with *Spectre VR*. Instead of fighting it out on a vast plain, the contest is decided in a closed course. An added dimension is the third dimension. In *Zephyr*, instead of Earth-bound behemoths, the tanks are hovercraft capable of limited flight.

In this future, commerce depends on winning trade concessions in the gladiatorial Interplanetary Battle Circuit. The



player represents one of six megacorporations. Each megacorp produces its own hovercraft with differing strengths and weaknesses in terms of weapons, shields, armor and speed of travel. Individual strategies and player preference dictate the best hovercraft and hence, corporate sponsor.

Megacorp vies with megacorp, using treachery and murder to achieve their ends. Players are encouraged to participate in their corporation's assorted vendettas against rivals. At the beginning of most rounds an operative from the sponsoring corporation explains a

misdeed done by an opposing corp. Big bonus points are won by pilots killing the offending competitor's hovercraft. Points are also earned for destroying any other tanks, police, camera crews, robots and hapless bystanders. Flying a *Zephyr* between two sets of checkered flags earns still more points for completing a lap. A player can often win a round simply by avoiding combat and completing as many laps as possible in the time allotted for each race.

The Interplanetary Battle Circuit consists of three seasons, composing of eight venues, each on a different world. Before each combat, a smarmy sportscaster announces on which world the next race will occur. The talking head then interviews the planetary leader to find out what trade concessions the winning corp will receive. The high scorer on each planet earns a bonus round to rack up even more points and improve his overall standing. The bonus tracks are generally the eeriest and most aesthetically pleasing, although not very challenging.

When the gate drops and the contestants are released into the beautifully designed and rendered arenas, most of the computer-controlled tankers immediately begin pounding each other. But at the start of the round, the stock hovercrafts are too undergunned to do much real damage. Power-ups are liberally distributed throughout the courses. The boosts in firepower, shields and power are necessary when going head-to-head with tough adversaries. Even when the player has decked-out his *Zephyr* with

full guns and power, the opposing tanks will absorb a long, concentrated pounding before coming apart.

The most intractable foe in *Zephyr* isn't the other tanks, but the molasses-slow screen updates. Aiming at the enemy is almost impossible. Rather, it requires the player to anticipate where the target will be in the next frame. The dramatic tensions of hide and seek, kill or be killed, are instead replaced with bored annoyance. When the screen fills with missiles, explosions and moving objects, the game slows even more.

New World recommends that *Zephyr* be played on a Pentium, but the faster chip should be a requirement. No amount of tinkering with the detail level and frame-rate will provide smooth operation on a 486DX2/66, the standard high-end gaming PC. The lush, 3-D-rendered graphics are pretty to look at but they overtax all but the most powerful PCs. Memory claims are steep, too: 522k conventional and 6,700k extended.

Complete keyboard control is supported. As with most first-person games, a joystick is a real necessity. Since the *Zephyr* hovercrafts have rotatable turrets, an advanced joystick with a built-in thumb controller such as the CH Flightstick Pro or the ThrustMaster Mark 1 is an aid in close combat. Mouse direction is provided for, but the additional processing overhead seems to slow the frame-rate even more than usual and it is the least intuitive mechanism for controlling a vehicle.

Forte's VFX1 and Victor Maxx's CyberMaxx virtual-reality systems are supported, but weren't tested. The video drivers and CPU cycles needed to run these HMDs (Head Mounted Displays) would probably bog *Zephyr* down to glacial speeds.

The *Zephyr* box touts a nonexistent multi-player compatibility. An IPX network support patch has been promised. The New World Product Information folder on AOL makes no mention of it.

Had *Zephyr* been a quick, smooth shoot-'em-up, New World would have had a real winner on its hands instead of an embarrassment. Whether it was over-enthusiastic designers or general inexperience with this type of game, unfortunately their reach exceeded their grasp.

(David T. Harris)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: New World Computing
DESIGNER: John Van Coneghem
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Hovercraft battle
HD SPACE: 6 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 8 levels, 3 rounds

Ravenloft

STONE PROPHET

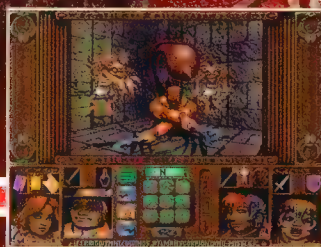
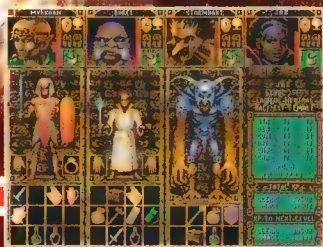
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WAKE UP—IT'S TIME TO DIE

Club Dead might just be your last resort

Much like *Rolling Stone* Magazine, MTV wears the mask of a cutting-edge entity to conceal the fact that it's just another sub-culture sellout. They hop aboard every Trendy Train that pulls into the station, but they're the first to backpedal when controversy

rears its ugly head. Madonna, Neil Young, Tom Petty and *Beavis & Butt-head* have all been neutered by nervous MTV execs at one time or another.

While their programming leans toward the insipid (*Real World*), moronic (*Beavis & Butt-head*) and repellent (new VJ Puck and that ratbag Kennedy), they've also managed to slip in some genuinely inspired stuff over the



Now they're serious with **Club Dead**, a Cyberpunk murder mystery that reels deliriously in and out of that new '90s drug of choice, Virtual Reality or V.

Set in the year 2024, players take on the role of Sam Frost, a V-addicted Cyberplumber sprung from prison by the mysterious Metacorp to investigate a series of incidents (deaths, actually) at the Alexandria, a psychedelic Virtual

Resort for the wretchedly rich and disturbingly eccentric.

Sam's got four short days to get to the bottom of things, and since **Club Dead** uses the same (but much improved) game engine as **Dracula**

Unleashed, Viacom's last CD-ROM-based video adventure, this mostly involves show-

ing up at the appropriate times and places to witness video segments and collect objects and clues.

The video-based nature of the game means that there's not a whole lot of actual player interaction but, like **Dracula**, the game still requires an extraordinary amount of concentration and keen observation.

The control interface has undergone a radical graphic overhaul and traditional tools such as inventory, the player's

journal and Game Option controls are also cosmetically and functionally tricked-out. While this treatment results in a certain loss of intuitiveness, its eerie unfamiliarity helps foster the atmosphere of paranoia and deception that permeates the Alexandria.

Don't panic, though—detailed audio-visual help is always available just a keypress away.

Like **Dracula**, **Club Dead** is extremely time-sensitive. Arrive at a location five minutes too early and you'll find nothing (although sometimes a quick exit and return will do the trick). Arrive five minutes too late and vital information is lost forever. Certain objects still need to be at hand and ready to use before entering some scenes or essential events will not occur.

The Alexandria resides on an island located precisely at Magnetic North, which apparently allows for some pretty potent VR. The specialized V Pods (Pleasure, Paradox, Nightmare, etc.) are each available only during specific hours so it's important to study the Electronic Access Guide to avoid unpleasant surprises.

As Sam conducts his undercover investigation, he'll gradually gain access to the more exotic areas of the resort, while meeting an assortment of fairly wacked-out characters, many of whom will be dying in short order. It doesn't take a certified genius to figure out who's being measured for a frame here (look in the mirror, dude) and Head of Security Lewis Scudder misses no opportunity to trot out Sparky, his best friend and trusty sidearm.

Club Dead features more than 90 minutes of original full-motion video in 20 different locations and a throbbing, pugnacious musical score by Martin Atkins (*Ministry*, *Killing Joke*, *Nine Inch Nails*). The acting is pretty hokey but works well within the framework of the aggressively edgy story line and while the static graphics are razor sharp, the video clips are purposely pixellated for that *Max Headroom*-20-minutes-into-the-future effect.

The end result, a deliberate amalgamation of Viacom's **Dracula Unleashed** and MTV's *Dead At 21*, is a genetic mutation that exhibits the best qualities of these parents. **B+** (*Scott Wolf*)



years—*Liquid Television*, *Dead at 21* and some imaginatively self-mocking contest promotions. So it comes as no surprise that they've taken to Interactive Entertainment like a mosh monkey at a White Zombie show.

Their first effort, a home version of the *Remote Control* game show, barely caused a ripple in the software pool, but their *Beavis & Butt-head* game is cleaning up on three separate platforms (Sega Genesis, Game Gear and SNES).

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Viacom New Media

DESIGNER: Viacom & MTV

SYSTEM: PC-CD

THEME: Cyberpunk Mystery

HD SPACE: N/A

PLAYERS: 1

LEVELS: N/A

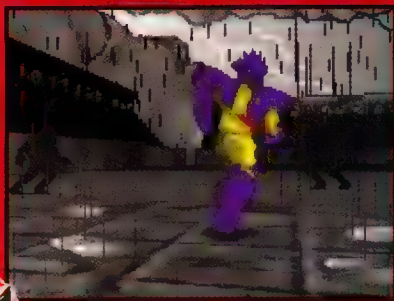
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REVIEWS

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.

	Amie Katz Editor	Macr. Cannon Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Steven L. Kent P.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
Blake Stone	C	D	-	C
Colonization	A-	A	A	A+
Dark Sun II	B	B	B	-
Doom II	A-	A-	A	B+
Flash Traffic	F	F	F	F
Global Domination	B	B	A	-
Hammer of the Gods	B	B	B	-
Harpoon II	A-	A-	B+	-
Hell	B-	B	C+	-
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	C+
Indy Car Racer	A	B+	B+	A
Master of Magic	-	B-	A	A
Menzoberranzan	B-	C+	B-	-
Metaltech: Earthsiege	B+	-	B+	C-
Microsoft Arcade	A	A	A	B+
Myst	B+	B+	A+	A+
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	B
Operation Crusader	B+	B	B-	-
Operation Europe	B-	C	-	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	B
Power Poker	C+	C-	B	B
Relentless: Twinson	B	C	-	B
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+
Warcraft	B	B-	B+	B-
Wing Commander III	A	B+	A	A+
Wolf	A-	B+	A-	A-



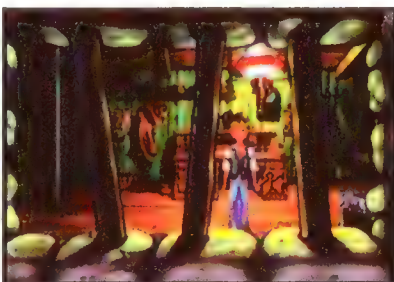
Everybody's favorite Asteroids can be relived today in Microsoft Arcade.

Metaltech: Battledrome (Dynamix/MS-DOS) Hot on the heels of *Earthsiege*, Dynamix has issued its first modem-ready entry in its *Metaltech* series. *Battledrome* seems to use the same basic engine, except the techs battle in the more network-friendly arena environment. Each gamer selects a HERC, its armament, the status of the arena, battle level and—most important of all—the amount of the wager. For only with winnings can one purchase more HERCs and bigger HERCs and better-armed HERCs! HERCS that could take over the world! Booohohahahahaha!



This looks like it will be the hottest tech fighter network computer game for the foreseeable future. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist (Sierra On-Line/PC CD-ROM) Freddy Pharkas is the *Blazing Saddles* of adventure games, combining the wacky come-



dy of Al Lowe and Josh Mandel with a Western setting. Players control lead character Pharkas, the only one-eared pharmacist in the West, as he investigates the disappearance of citizens and businesses from the frontier town of Coarsegold, CA. The puzzles are as funny as the characters; verbal/visual puns involve such tasks as mixing drugs and cures and solving the town's horses' deadly flatulence. This new CD-ROM version of the original disk-based game features digitized speech by talented voice actors and actresses. Sing along to the Ballad of Freddy Pharkas during the introduction! **B+** (Russ Ceccola)

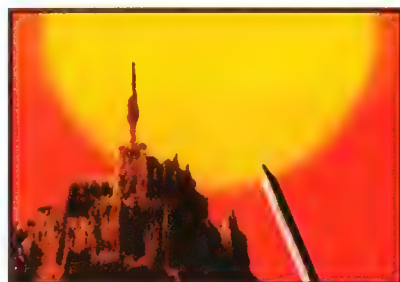
Scrabble (Interplay/Mac system 6.0.7 or higher) The venerable word game comes to the Macintosh, courtesy of MacPlay. With the help options, any player can come off like a sesquipedal-



lian and rack up big points. One may play against multiple computer opponents, or several humans can play around the computer. Nine different levels of computer AI will challenge all. Varying time limits can be imposed on turns or the timer can be turned off. The computer opponents will take advantage of this and take up to 10 minutes to make a word, so it's probably a good idea to set some time limit. There's a huge *Scrabble* dictionary, and more options than can be listed here. *Scrabble* fans should definitely check it out. **B+** (John W. Hardin)

Powerhits: Sports (Activision/PC-CD) A shovel full of failed Activision sports games makes up this collection. Of the four games—*Faceoff*, *Pro Tennis Tour*, *Motocross* and *Power Drift*—none are even a decade old, but all look like they come from the dark ages of PC gaming. Roundup: *Faceoff* is a third-rate hockey game; *Motocross* is a conceptually sound cycle racer (designed by Jeff Tunnell) that is undone by its graphics and control; *Power Drift* was a woeful attempt to bring Sega's coin-op to the PC and Ubi Soft's *Pro Tennis Tour*, one of the newer entries, is the best program of the quartet. Listen for Russ Lieblich's cool scores on both *Faceoff* and *Power Drift*. **F-** (Bill Kunkel)

The Madness of Roland (Hyperbole Studios/Windows-Mac Hybrid CD) Rather than a game, this is a surrealistic play/novel, loosely based on the Carolingian legends of Roland, with multimedia embellishments. Its seven chapters each have several parts, telling the story from the often contradictory point of view of one of the characters (including Roland's sword). As text appears on screen, actors read it in character. Hypertext words or phrases



evoke brief explanations or associated quotes, while Sun and Moon icons bring in other texts and animations to enhance the context. Author/producer/creator Greg Roach conceived this as interactive theater and brought to it humor and thought-provoking life commentary. It's enjoyable, but possibly for a limited audience. **B** (Ross Chamberlain)

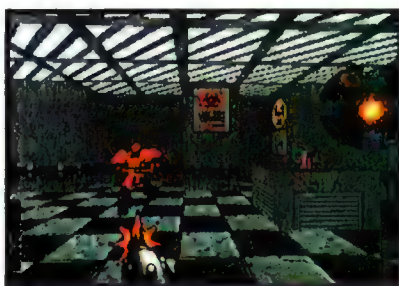
Unnecessary Roughness '95 (Accolade/MS-DOS) To distinguish UR from the legions of computer football sims, it's the one with all the optional camera



angles. There's even a HelmetCam (first-person POV) and an Infinity Cam Mode (user-selectable camera angles). It also has the NFL imprimatur (allowing real team names and logos) as well as the NFLPA license for access to real players and their stats. The players are 3-D modeled based on motion-capture technology and some of the visual presentations are really unique and impressive, while other tricks fall flat. There's also trading, stats and ratings (30+ categories), and plenty of eye appeal. UR '95 is a very ambitious program; it should appeal to both purists and visual realism junkies. **B+** (Bill Kunkel)

CyClones (SSI/PC-CD) This is the latest in what promises to be a glut of would-

be Doom-killers from every developer capable of building (or renting) an



engine. **CyClones**, developed by Raven Software, is an installation nightmare. (Get ready to look up your soundboard defaults and, just for fun, there's no joystick mode—keyboard and mouse only.)

The game itself is nicely rendered but totally generic, with right-angle, Doom-style settings and bit-mapped graphics. Gratuitous FMV is tossed in for no real reason. Bottom line: If you need one more of these, here it is!

No network capability. **C+** (Bill Kunkel)

Yes Active (Comptons/Win-Mac Hybrid CD) This is really an expansion of the rock group's album *Talk*. A menu offers choices of Profiles (vital and not-so-vital statistics on each of the five current members of the group); Inside Look, which offers the CD version, lyric and comments on each of the album's seven cuts by either Jon Anderson or Trevor Rubin (in QuickTime clips), plus live versions and instrumentals on some; Juke Box, a direct option to play any or all of the CD cuts; The Music Workshop, the only really interactive portion of the CD, with each member of the group demonstrating his instruments in QuickTime and History, a Yes discog-

raphy. Sadly, none of the great album covers appear. **B** (Ross Chamberlain)

Trivial Pursuit (Virgin/MPC) The goal hasn't changed a bit from the original Yuppie game of the '80s; be the first to earn six pieces of pie by correctly answering thousands of trivia questions. Each question has an accompanying sound or video clip, and there are lots of humorous animations.

Not so funny are the technical problems we encountered simply getting the game to run. After three computers and a tech support call, it deigned to run. It's so true to the original, there isn't even a one-player game. Despite a no-brainer interface and copious eye and ear candy, **Trivial Pursuit** on the PC is less fun than *Trivial Pursuit* on the living room floor. **C** (John W. Hardin)



CORRECTION

Here is the last paragraph of Sara Slaymaker's review of SSI's *Menzoberranzan* which was inadvertently cut short in the March EG:

There are many RPGs on the market, and sometimes it gets difficult to tell them apart. But nobody can miss *Menzoberranzan*. Not even New Yorkers. **B+** (Sara Slaymaker)

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RISE AND FALL

Rise of the Robots falls short of the mark

Rise of the Robots is a remarkable example of cross-platform licensing. The varying SKUs were released almost simultaneously on every system from PC-CD-ROM to the 16-Bit platforms, to the Game Gear.

If players haven't seen the game, this saturation marketing approach makes it likely they've read at least one review in this or some other magazine. The reviews generally agree: **Rise of the Robots**, for

all that it is a graphical phenomenon, is at best only a mediocre fighting game.

The backstory here is the same as on the other platforms. The player takes the role of a part-human cyborg on a

desperate mission to stop the uprising of Electrocorp's robots in Metropolis Four. The robots are infected with the Ego virus, which gives them free will and

makes them uppity to the point where they won't work for humans.

The Ego virus resides most strongly

in the Supervisor. This robot is using its powers over other robots to spread the Ego virus and chaos through the city.

The player must defeat a variety of lower-level robots before the most fear-

some Supervisor can be battled. There's the loader, builder, crusher, military, security and supervisor droids. Each robot has its own strengths and weaknesses, until the higher levels, where enemies have no weaknesses that the player can discern.

As on the other platforms,

six opponents does not really feel like a full complement of foes.

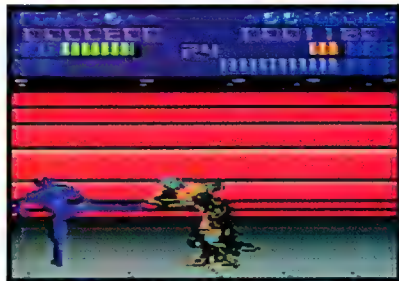
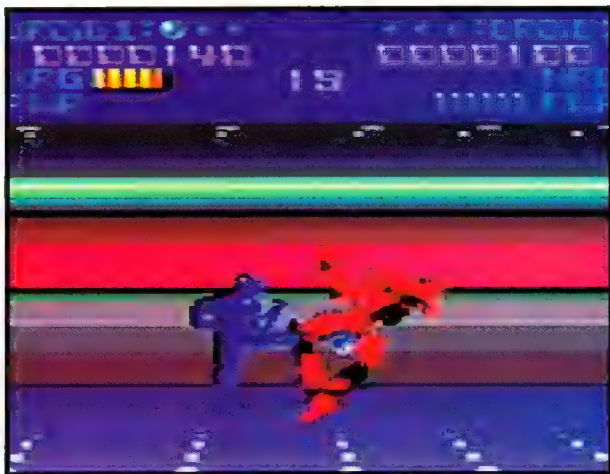
The fighting itself is a little different than in the other versions. As in the other games, punches come in varying power. Unlike the other games where the player presses different buttons for different strength punches, the Game Gear player holds down the button while a strength meter builds up. Pressing the button rapidly delivers many quick, light blows, while holding the button down for a moment delivers a powerful punch or kick when the button is released.

A small handful of options allow gamers to optimize play. The round timer can be set for 30, 70, 90 and 120 seconds, or it can be turned off altogether. The matches can be best of three, best of five or best of seven. Like the other incarnations, players can go to Training Mode, where different enemies may be selected to practice against. However, one cannot practice against the Supervisor in Training Mode.

The so-so combat seen in the other platforms degrades even further on the Game Gear. For one thing, the robots move much too quickly. These are supposed to be heavy machines, and even the bulkiest and heaviest in the other platforms jump around as if they were light as feathers. The player is often reduced to pushing buttons randomly as a heavy, loader robot streaks across the screen and delivers a flurry of blows.

The small screen of the Game Gear makes it difficult to see exactly where the punches and kicks are landing.

The cut scenes are the most impressive graphics in the game. Unfortunately, the Game Gear's screen is too small to adequately display the one thing that



really stood out in previous incarnations: the graphics. The robots don't have that authentic 3-D look that they displayed on the other platforms.

Take away the eye candy, and **Rise of the Robots** falls flat. Not to expect miracles of the platform, but a game that relies heavily on graphical appeal instead of game play, needs more than the Game Gear can offer.

There are a lot of side-perspective fighting games available for players to choose from, and nothing about **Rise of the Robots** is good or different enough to make it stand out from the crowd. If Game Gear owners are really jonesing for a fighting game, there's always **Mortal Kombat**. **C-** (John W. Hardin)

As on the other platforms,



TECH SPECS

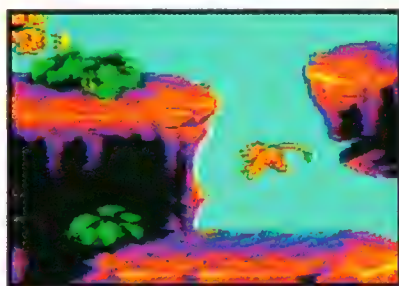
PUBLISHER: Time Warner
SYSTEM: Game Gear
THEME: Fighting
MEGABITS: 4
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

FIFA International Soccer (Electronic Arts/Game Gear) This portable version of the super soccer sim has most of the frills that make it great on every platform on which it has appeared. Players can choose between an action game, with all the thrills of soccer without the annoying effects of fatigue, or a full-scale simulation, which duplicates the decrease in player performance as the kickers grow tired. Fouls can be toggled on or off for more or less realism, as on the other platforms, and field conditions affect the ball's behavior. With variable team coverage, strategy, formations and controls, **FIFA Soccer** is simply the deepest and most flexible soccer game on any platform. Even on the Game Gear it is exceedingly playable. This is the **John Madden Football** of soccer games and another winner from EA Sports. **A+** (John W. Hardin)



that, **seaQuest** is a diverting title, with solid game play. **B** (John W. Hardin)

The Lion King (Virgin/Game Gear) This hand-held adaptation of the hit film is very similar to the 16-Bit versions. The player guides cub Simba and adult Simba through 10 levels, facing puzzles and hyenas much as in the other versions. There's even a Pumbaa bonus

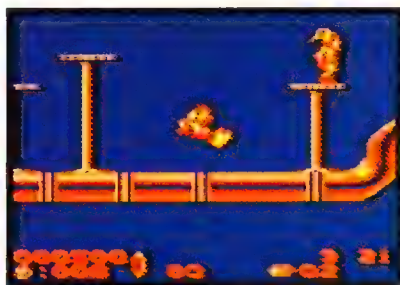


round, but it's easier than the one in the other games. There are enough changes to keep return players from feeling like they've seen it all before. The animation is spectacular, the colors are bright and clear and the sound is as good as it gets on the Game Gear. **A** (John W. Hardin)

Sports Illustrated Golf (T*HQ/Game Boy) A golf game for the Game Boy that is actually worth playing? Hard to believe, but here it is. Programmed by Malibu games, **SIG** is easy to pick up. The intuitive commands allow even amateur players to master the controls quickly and concentrate on the nuances of whacking that little ball as far (and accurately) as they can. While superior in the sound and graphics departments, **SIG** has but two 18-hole courses, and only four players to choose from. They had to compromise somewhere to keep the game down to size, and this seems the best solution. Portable digital duffers should dig it. **A-** (John W. Hardin)



Bubsy 2 (Accolade/Game Boy) Features that Bubsy fans take for granted seem amazing on this excellent cart. Bubsy jumps, flies, soars and leaps with all the panache he showed on the 16-Bit platforms. Here, Bubsy adventures through a smaller version of Oinker P. Hamm's museum of stolen history, the Amazatorium. There are three wings for Bubsy to explore: the Music world, the Aerial world and the Egyptian world. Three different tours take the player through the first, second or third floor of each wing, each floor being more



difficult than the last. The Grand tour takes Bubsy through all the floors of all the worlds, with expanded versions of the first and second floors. The graphics are outstanding for a Game Boy title, and there is lots of authentic Bubsy action here. The game play is great. Recommended. **A** (John W. Hardin)

seaQuest DSU (T*HQ/Game Boy) Players take command of the seaQuest Deep Sea Vehicle in this side-scrolling, action/puzzle cart. A variety of missions test the player's skill in submarine combat, piloting the DSV, guiding remote probes and solving puzzles. The graphics are pretty good for the Game Boy, but trying to track some of the fast-moving objects on the small screen can be truly retina thrashing. Other than

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MINING FOR GOLD IN THE COLD

Learn the history and geography of the North
while adventuring along *The Yukon Trail*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: MECC
DESIGNER: Diane Partner
SYSTEM: MPC or Mac CD
THEME: Educational
HD SPACE: 4 MB Ram
PLAYERS: 1

It's a white, frozen world; a wilderness of mountains, forests, tundra and rivers. The Klondike Gold Rush of 1897 drew thousands of hopeful treasure hunters to Alaska. Most suffered severe tribulations, and many lost their lives. But some found wealth in this, the last great gold rush in the U.S.

MECC has an established history of trail games. *The Oregon Trail* is a phenomenon; wagons have rolled along that silicon highway for almost 20 years, helping school children learn the history of the Western Migration. This year, MECC is trying to translate this two-decade success formula into similar explorations, with *The Amazon Trail* and *The Yukon Trail*.

The adventure trail has changed a great deal since MECC first introduced *The Oregon Trail*. In the interim years, the computer industry matured, and play experiences became much more sophisticated. Unfortunately, MECC barely altered its first recipe to keep up with the times, and the new games lack the depth of programming needed to make a hit in today's market.

The Yukon Trail uses the tried-and-true combinations that made *The Oregon Trail* a success in the school market. The player buys supplies and a ticket to one of two jump-off points in Alaska. After a brief sea journey, there's a chance to pick up hints by talking to people. Then it's off to the Trail.

An on-screen map tracks the player's progress. Automatic entries in a diary chronicle all events and keep track of money and food on hand. Pop-up textual messages report trail emergencies.

The trail screens feature, in addition to the full-screen map, a postage-stamp sized window that depicts the actions of walking feet, a sailing ship and other animated actions.

There are several full-screen paintings of different locations. The Seattle area (the jump-off place for the adventurer) features docks, a ticket office and an outfitter's store. Various people standing around each location can provide tidbits of information. Each town along the route has an interactive scene, with more opportunities for conversation. In this way, the player meets numerous personalities, including a few historical people.

While boating up the Yukon River, the player must navigate through several rapids, using the cursor to lead the boat.



These are unattractive scenes: A flat blue background represents the river, with stones and whirlpools to avoid, and an overhead view of the boat. The difficulty of steering a boat through rapids is simulated by cranky control response, not a particularly exciting or satisfying play experience.

Many choices the player makes seem to be just window dressing. For example, if the boat overturns in the rapids, the player is given a choice of going ahead, doing a three-day repair or building an entire new boat. These options make little or no difference in what happens next. Similarly, when a text message says someone has had an injury on

the trail, the player can choose to rest or go ahead, and there seems to be no penalty for just continuing the march.

The simulation of this exciting period of history lacks the technical execution to be really intriguing to the player. There should be more visible results from every decision. Failures of preparation or execution (as in the river boat episodes) should cause some truly disastrous effects.

Although the route is painstakingly traced on the map, there is no effort to picture the terrain. The learner gains no appreciation of the vast North, sees none of its wonderful sights and learns nothing about the people living there.

Inexplicably, although there are periodic messages about blizzards, the player is never given a glimpse of what they look like. Unbelievably, the player is never even told the temperature. Suffering simply does not exist, except the suffering of boredom.

Once the player reaches Dawson City (and it's practically impossible to fail to endure the trip), there's a map of available claim sites. The player chooses,

and the scene switches to a view of a river bank with people using various kinds of mining equipment. Clicks on each produces text boxes to explain their use. The amount of gold found is a completely random event that has nothing to do with player effort or skill.

MECC should be complimented for its effort to keep trail history alive. But, the company needs to bring its design and programming efforts into the modern era. What's offered in *The Yukon Trail* is simply not good enough to involve the player in a meaningful way, nor does it provide a worthy view of Klondike days.

No gold here. **C-** (Joyce Worley)

GAHAN WILSON GOES MULTIMEDIA

"Hey everybody, do you like mystery and adventure? Then let's play at my house—it's haunted!"

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Brooklyn Multimedia
DESIGNER: Freitag & Lanza
SYSTEM: Macintosh CD
THEME: Puzzle Solving
HD SPACE: 8 MB
PLAYERS: 1

Although Gahan Wilson is best known for appearances in sophisticated, adult magazines like *The New Yorker* and *Playboy*, it's amazing that he hasn't been used in the edutainment medium before this. Although vampires and other creatures of the night are his stock-in-trade, they are never intended to frighten anyone. If anything, Wilson makes his monsters funny by humanizing them, making them vulnerable to the same miseries that afflict the rest of us.

This really makes Wilson the ideal artist to illustrate the eponymously titled **Gahan Wilson's The Ultimate Haunted House**.

Haunted House contains 13 mysterious rooms in which to wander, explore and complete a variety of activities.

Players begin the quest in the foyer. Toward the left center of the screen is a large clock, which is extremely important. In order to leave the **Haunted House**, users must successfully locate and place all 13 keys before the clock strikes 13 o'clock. The clock is also the location of all of the commands: save, load, pause, help and quit.



One especially neat feature is the Carpetbag. Much like the special suitcase in the 1964 Disney movie, *Mary Poppins*, the **Haunted House** 'bag can hold a grand assortment of items, including books, circuit boards, light

bulbs, monsters, film reels, drums of toxic waste, etc. The Carpetbag moves from room to room with the intrepid explorer and provides a wonderful starting point for interaction with the residents of the Haunted House.

By giving the characters items that have been gathered up, and letting them keep what they want, the player may



The graphics are extremely sharp and well colored, with even the macabre elements (body parts for assembling monsters, corpses in coffins, etc.) rendered



receive something in return, including the missing keys. In a move that enhances the game, the characters will desire different objects each time **Haunted House** is played. However, the monsters' personalities will remain consistent, so players can learn what makes the characters angry, and what gets them to give the player the objects they need.

While **Haunted House** is not a focused educational program (it doesn't set out to teach math, grammar or mapping, etc.), it does help develop many skills that will assist children in their schoolwork, including logic puzzles and sequencing.

Haunted House presents an impressively challenging range of attractions that will grow with young users, including monster movie trailers, and Gahan Wilson's more familiar artwork. (If players can find the hidden art gallery...) While the program elements

in a sufficiently cartoonish style to defuse the scariness and allow open communication between parents and children about scary things in the world.

The music track adds a nice audio layer to the proceedings and the sound effects are spot-on. We experienced some soundboard problems when the CD went into "Reading" Mode, but it didn't happen frequently.

Since this isn't a singular content program, there aren't any evaluative features for parents. However, the program is nonintimidating to children and does offer encouragement and correction.

Gahan Wilson's Ultimate Haunted House lives up to its reputation as software "to delight monster lovers." Since most kids love monsters, exposing them to one of the most famous cartoonists in the horror/humor pantheon shows kids that the things that go bump in the night probably just tripped. **B+** (Laurie Yates)

With children developing into avid computerists, it was only a matter of time until hardware became more kid-friendly. Here's a peek at some of what's out there. (At press time, all of the keyboards are for IBMs and compatibles, but Macintosh versions are planned by all of the companies.)

My First Keyboard (KidTech, Inc.) is spill-proof with 55 keys, with the alphabet set up in a two-row A to Z format, perfect for the 1 1/2-year-olds for whom this board is designed. The board's technology is ideal as only one response is registered per touch. It's compatible with most kids' software.

The **kidBoard** (kidBoard, Inc.) is specifically designed for the 3-to-8 crowd. Its strong use of primary colors is inviting to children, and adding icons to the alphabet keys assists in teaching children the art of keyboarding. The heavy plastic casing, durable enough to withstand a youngster's pounding, resembles a cartoon face, complete with eyes, ears and chin. **kidBoard** comes with a software package to familiarize youngsters with the alphabet, keyboard and computer operations.

BrainWorks, meanwhile, is aiming at the 9-year-old or older computerist who are young at heart. Their rugged plastic, standard 85-key boards include an integral wrist rest and highly tactile construction. Working with licenses from **Star Trek** and **Nickelodeon** to **The Flintstones**, BrainWorks' lines of keyboards, mice, disk holders, mouse pads and monitor frames have strong kid appeal.

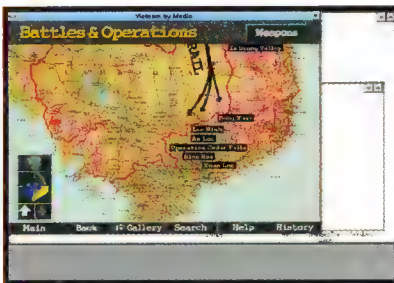
Any child who has access to a computer has access to a new world, but an uninspiring and adult-looking PC can be intimidating. Fortunately, keyboard manufacturers are now targeting even the youngest keyboarders.

(Laurie Yates)



The **kidBoard** utilizes primary colors, large shapes and icons to help children.

Vietnam (Medio/PC CD—Family) This reference work weaves the threads of the tragic war's history with interviews, footage, photos and a stocked text library, all punctuated by sounds and voices from the era. Coverage includes the home front, albeit in less detail.



The clearcut timeline, large photo gallery and click-on maps make this an intuitive exploration. **Vietnam** is a remarkable piece of encyclopedic programming for both those who lived through our longest war, and those who are too young to remember. A fine addition to any historian's library. **B+** (Joyce Worley)

Kid Vid Grid (Jasmine/PC CD—Ages 3-Adult) This video puzzle game offers challenges ranging from a simple, four-piece puzzle to a 25-piece inverted, where some of the individual pieces are upside-down. The finished puzzles allow players to view classic cartoons starring popular Hanna-Barbera characters.

As an amusing sequencing and concentration tutorial, **Kid Vid Grid** is solid stuff while Boomers will love getting another peek at Pixie & Dixie and Jinx the Cat. **A** (Laurie Yates)

Thumbelina (Trimark/Macintosh CD—Ages 3-9) Hans Christian Anderson's tiny charmer lives again in this 12-page, animated storybook. Words are highlighted as spoken, and every item pictured is clickable for additional animations. The CD also includes a dictionary that might be useful to readers and a brief biography of the author. Whimsical animations of the pastel storybook paintings keep it interesting. Best for younger girls; it moves too slowly for older ages. **A** (Joyce Worley)



The Time Shop (Josten's Home Learning/Hybrid CD—Ages 4-9) JHL, a leading provider of computer-based instruction to schools, moves into the home market with its Language Enrichment programs.

Time Shop focuses on the four seasons. With reading comprehension questions, vocabulary builders and behavior puzzles, parents can track their child's progress, both in activities completed, and the length of time spent on them. Overall, a good program, but Josten's may want to spend some more time on smooth and realistic animations. **B** (Laurie Yates)

Next Step: Mars? (IVI/PC CD—12-Adult) The player must decide mankind's worthiness to travel into space by studying our works: philosophies, history and accomplishments. At the same time, the player acquires a lot of knowledge about our space program. It's no game, but the content is provocative—forcing the student to hear and read the material, then pass tests in order to move to new areas. This is not to be confused with fun, although it's a fine teaching tool. **B-** (Joyce Worley)

Why Do We Have To? (World Book/Hybrid CD—Ages 2-7) This story/activity series introduces youngsters to the Alpha-bet Pals—anthropomorphic animals facing problems similar to their audience's.

Several activities that are integrated into this program (right way/wrong way, pick-a-pair, etc.) make this a fun way to learn safety rules. **B** (Laurie Yates)

My First Encyclopedia (Knowledge Adventure/PC CD—Ages 3-6) Set in the form of a magical tree, with clickables that inform, entertain and educate, this program concentrates on Space;



Geography; The Body; Buildings; Food; Transportation; Arts and Culture; Earth and Nature; Careers, Sports and Famous People and Animals. It provides animations, live actors, videos, games, coloring books, original music, a full paint set and lots more. This is a great first program that will continue to amuse and educate for years. **A** (Joyce Worley)

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HELPING NEWBIES AVOID FLAMEOUT

Minding Your Cyber-Manners on the Internet, Dr. Donald Rose, Alpha Books, 194 pgs. (softbound, \$12.99)

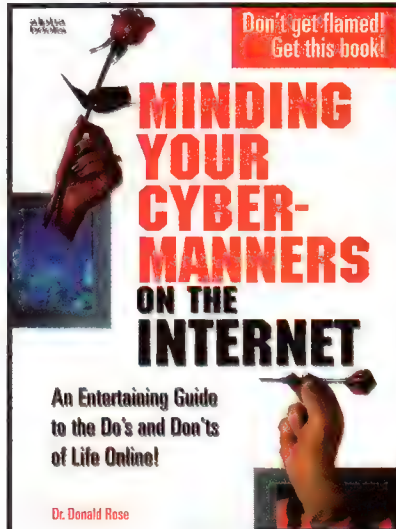
If ever a place needed an Emily Post pontificating about its protocol, it is the Internet. In this brief but thorough companion to on-line endeavors, readers are exposed to the many forms of faux pas that are unique to this community. Whether explaining the very distinct differences between Spamming, Whamming and Jamming, or speaking more exoterically about Netics, Dr. Rose always keeps his audience, fledgling cybernauts, in mind.

The work is divided into four parts. In the first, readers are introduced to the basic composition of e-mail, some very rudimentary do's and don'ts and the basic building blocks of good on-line manners. These "Cybercommandments" are presented in a light, readable style, but their content is as sacred as that of their religious counterparts.

The author makes a point of leading off each chapter with a synopsis of what he intends to accomplish therein, which serves to focus the reader's attention on the subject. A summary at the end of the chapters reinforces each salient point without appearing redundant, freeing the author to move to new ground in the subsequent chapter.

Part II, "Popular Problems and Questionable Net Behavior," introduces flaming (discussed below), as well as the aforementioned triad of lyrical techniques: Spamming, which is mass postings to multiple mailboxes at the same time; Jamming, which is akin to stuffing someone's box full of junk mail and Whamming, in which savvy users retaliate in very large groups against obnoxious newbies.

More important than these, however, is Dr. Rose's analysis of the various personalities one might expect to encounter in the on-line community. Because of the relative anonymity enjoyed by users, the normal social conventions one has come to expect do not apply. As such, new users can run afoul of everything from gender benders (men claiming to be women and vice versa) to armchair psychologists who enjoy nothing better than toying with the thoughts and emotions of their favorite thread. As Dr. Rose points out, a favorite saying on the net is "...in cyberspace, no one knows you are a dog."



In Part III, gender issues and the more adult sections are explored in greater detail, as these areas have developed yet more protocol, one level greater removed from the general net. Following this, the author does a prompt about-face and addresses unfettered social issues for users who are simply into finding friends on-line and fostering a less dark sense of community. The final two chapters in this section deal with privacy/security issues on the net and how to use the medium for work and profit.

The fourth section is just icing on the cake. The Hall of Flame, which refers to the on-line practice of reducing new members who do stupid things (at least in the eyes of more experienced users) to charred husks of their former selves

via prolific and seasoned abuse, contains some great data. The top seven examples of flame bait may not read as wittily as one of David Letterman's lists, but they are much more enlightening. Also, Dr. Rose's introduction of the "Form Flame," a method whereby one can crucify an unsuspecting victim with minimal effort and expenditure of time, is not to be missed.

Part IV also contains a guide to Cyberese, the unique language composed largely of emoticons, acronyms and abbreviations. To new users, it is often impossible to follow an e-mail thread because it is so riddled with these compressed forms of communication which save valuable keystrokes.

In lieu of having to master these hieroglyphics on-line, Dr. Rose has provided readers with a concise Lexicon. To determine if this would be of value to you, gentle reader, simply fill in the meanings of as many of the following as possible:

Quiz

1. BTSOOM
2. FAQ
3. FYA
4. GR&D
5. IMNSHO
6. ROTFL
7. TIC
8. LAFS
9. MOTIS
10. NIFOC
11. SNAG
12. WFYITBWNBLJO

If you got 10 to 12 responses correct, you are already a well-versed, upstanding member of the Internet and probably do not need this book.

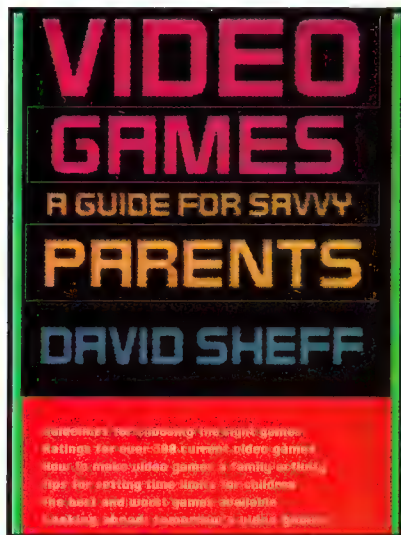
If you got six to nine responses correct, you are well on your way to being a valued member of the community, but your breath is still bad now and then. Read the book.

If you got five or less correct and you don't buy this book, you will be served up for consumption with some fava beans and a nice chianti before the week is out. Once the flame war begins, it's too late to go back and figure out the ground rules. (*Ed Dille*)

1. Beats the s**t out of me
2. Frequently asked question
3. For your amusement
4. Grinning, running and ducking
5. In my not-so-humble opinion
6. Rolling on the floor laughing
7. Tongue in cheek
8. Love at first sight (or site)
9. Member of the inappropriate sex
10. Nude in front of computer
11. Sensitive new-age guy
12. Waiting for you in the bathtub
wearing nothing but lime Jell-O

KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL

Video Games: A Guide for Savvy Parents, David Sheff, Random House, 156 pages (Softbound, \$10)



David Sheff, author of *Game Over: How Nintendo Zapped an American Industry, Captured Your Dollars and Enslaved Your Children*, states at one point in this new book, "On one radio call-in show, I was asked if video games should be outlawed. I don't believe in censorship, but that is not to say that I wouldn't wish them away if I could." This opinion shines through the entire work, and while he occasionally does offer some opposing viewpoints, they are generally given short shrift.

His introductory acknowledgments

are made to a long list of "parents, psychologists, researchers and teachers," to children and to the public relations staffs of a large number of video game publishers and agencies, plus Senators Joseph Lieberman and Herb Kohl.

He writes from the point of view of a parent and frequently cites the concerns he's heard from other parents to support his views. Very early in the book, he says that he set narrow time limits on how much his son, 12, can play: half an hour on school nights and an hour on weekends. These times may be extended, but rarely, for special occasions.

Sheff does play video games occasionally and has done so since the introduction of **Pong**. He enjoys some specific ones, like **Tetris** and **Mario Paint**. But in writing about games, he has a serious tendency to lump the entire genre together. In the first chapter, he says, "Adults who aren't certain what this video game stuff is all about ought to look over the shoulders of children playing **Mortal Kombat**." After describing some of the gorier aspects of that game (much as did innumerable newscasts during the clamor of late 1993 and early 1994), he mentions **Night Trap** and describes one of its nasty scenes, also as seen in the newscasts. He fails, as they did, to mention that it was an object of the game to

prevent those events from occurring. He also poo-pooes industry attempts to characterize such violent games as intended for adults: "This is untrue; these games have been marketed for children, and children have always played them."

The first four chapters document his research under these titles: Moral Kombat, The Myth That Video Games Are Better Than Television, More Myths And Exaggerations About Video Games and 'Finish Him Off': Sex and Violence in Video Games.

The next chapter, Living With Video Games, offers his recommendations to parents on controlling their children's playing habits, including not only his own experiences but also those of others he interviewed. His recommendations, embodied in the subheads, are: Time Limits, Select Age-Appropriate Games and Ones You are Comfortable With, Use Games as a Reward, Create Alternatives, Play the Games Yourself!, Play Video Games with Your Children, Encourage Children to Play Together and Use the Power Button.

The final chapters are given over to his choices, with explanations, for the Best and Worst Games, and a selection of the Best and Worst as picked by kids—often not matching his. A last chapter looks at the future—a surprisingly positive view, or at least a hopeful one, considering. The book concludes with a multipage reference chart of games with content guides and Sheff's grades on a percentage scale.

Concerned parents who are prepared to separate the wheat from the chaff could do well to read this book, with the understanding that Sheff tends to see the chaff only. It couldn't hurt to also read *The Kunkel Report* in *EG's* March issue for another perspective. (Ross Chamberlain)

PLAY THRU

Microsoft Golf: The Official Strategy Guide, Rick Barba & Jeff Hoff, Prima, 288 pages (\$19.95)

Golf is not for everybody, and the same can be said for computer golf. The latter does have a few advantages, such as the time it takes to play a round, and the option to select a difficulty level. Another great advantage is embodied in this book, which takes



the reader step by step through a fascinating world of possibilities the casual computuffer might never have

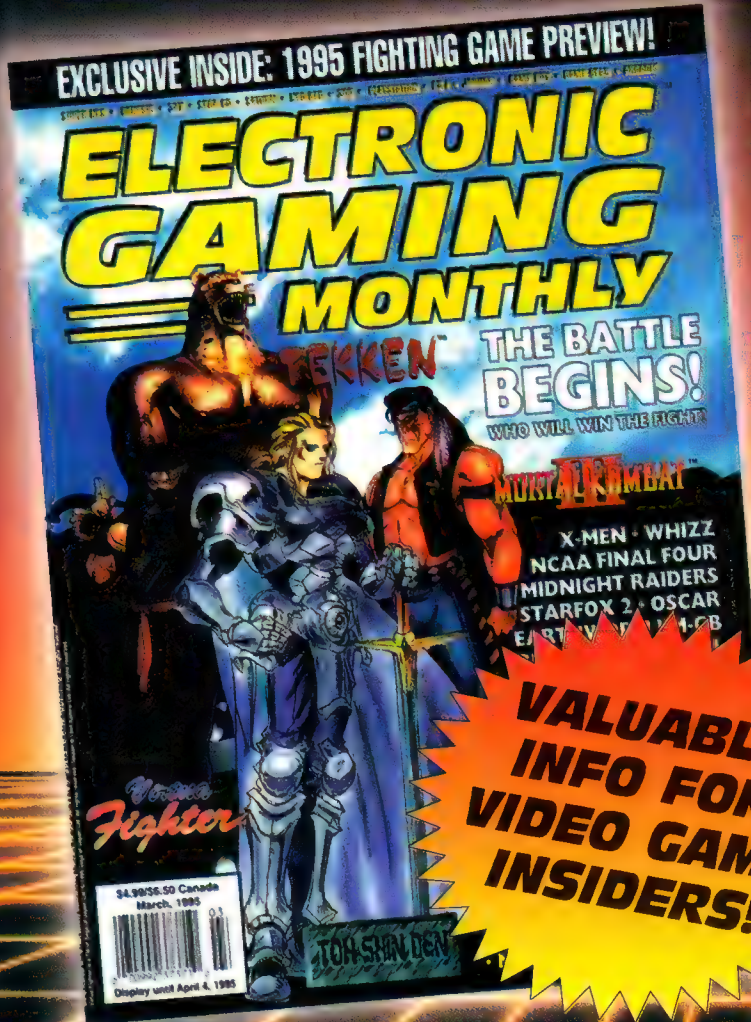
discovered on his or her own. Moreover, the work is done with good humor and love for the game, and is well salted with quotes from well-known golfers from Andrew Carnegie to Jack Nicklaus.

Part 1, the first 10 chapters, called How to Play Microsoft Golf, consists largely of helping the player work with the complex interface and also prepares the player to work with it. For example, one chapter is devoted to Club Selection; another is called Notes on the Psychology of Golf. Part Two (Chapter 11) consists of shot distance charts (for each club and each difficulty level) that are useful for players who plan ahead. And Part 3, (Chapters 12-17) strategy for five courses in the **Microsoft Golf** lineup. This book shoots eagles all around the course. (Ross Chamberlain)

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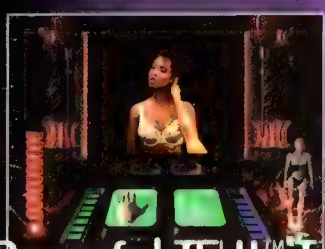
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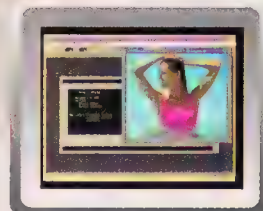
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HEIMLICH MANEUVER

Broken Window Pains— Part II

Last month we talked about the merger of Windows and PC games.

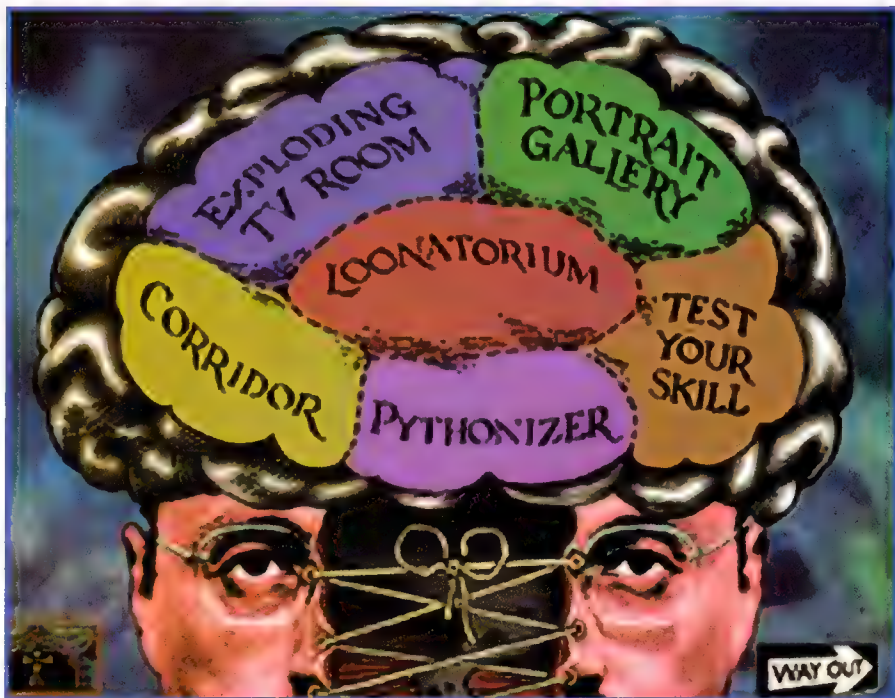
The main reason I'm so concerned about this issue is actually quite simple. First, it seems obvious to me that this match is not a marriage made in heaven. Second and more concerning, is the comment I've been hearing from developers recently. That is, "We realize that we're going to have to take a step backward in order to make this all work." In other words, the developers agree with my concerns but have decided, all the same, to move ahead by moving back.

This is quite *shocking!* I've been proud to be a member of this industry for one main reason: Computer games have always, quietly, pushed the PC to new levels. We have never gone backward.

When **Wing Commander** first shipped and required a then-new 386, most everyone but Origin felt that the game would flop due to hardware requirements. We were all wrong. Most people found a way to move up to the hardware **Wing Commander** demanded and it's happened ever since. Now the development community is embracing the idea of giving up on the cutting edge "for a while" in order to sell more games to the toaster crowd who won't (or can't) work outside of Windows (and I suspect that most of them can't set the clock on their VCRs either).

This thinking will not work. There are too many things wrong with Windows (and Windows '95) that make it a lame horse even with less-ambitious games. To start with, Windows is so convoluted that many of us feel it necessary to buy "uninstallers" just to keep things working cleanly. (After testing a few dozen of them, I highly recommend *RemoveIt* from Vertisoft Systems.)

Then there's the much ballyhooed WIN-G, which is a group of optimized video routines that help speed up graphics under Windows. It's one *small* step in the right direction. It's about the same thing as using a small Band-Aid when in actuality you really need a tourniquet.



Another problem is that Windows doesn't provide a decent way to handle different screen resolutions. My favorite Windows card games (**Rummy 500**, **Seahaven Towers** and **Canasta**) all have no trouble but these are simple card games. For example, if you have Windows set to 1024x768 and try to play **Microsoft Golf**, you get a window that is barely bigger than half the screen. Who can enjoy a game when it only fills half the screen?

Sure, I can tell Windows to run in 640x480 resolution but first, that's not as easy as it should be to do and second, why should I have to decide between optimal resolution for games *or* my word processor, etc? DOS has no problem with this and neither should Windows.

Also tied to this is a problem with which System Font you have installed. If I use Large Fonts, I have games that then have buttons you can't reach because they scroll off the bottom of the screen. But then I have other games that demand Small Fonts. I can't win.

Many developers believe that Windows will allow them to forget about certain things like which sound and video cards you have. If they have Windows drivers then all's well, right? Uh-huh.

Bug-free Windows drivers are about as rare as bug-free games. Case in point: **Monty Python's Complete Waste Of Time** (a great CD). When I first tried to run it, it started then locked. I called tech support and after a while the rep asked me about my video card. I have a top-selling ATI card.

He said, "Oh, yeah, that card, Diamond cards and several others have a problem with how they fade to black. Switch to 64,000 colors and it'll work."

He's right, it worked all right. But what happens when I have a game that requires me to run in 256 colors? I can already see the outcome of nearly all tech-support calls in the future. "It's not our problem, it's your sound driver."

Of course the sound card manufacturer won't see it that way. He'll blame the video driver and you'll be making another call.

The bottom line is that the novice PC user will end up completely disheartened by all the problems encountered and meanwhile, you and I will have to live with a bunch of toned-down, even-buggier games aimed at those same people.

.....
by **Rich Heimlich**
Heimlich is a noted authority on multi-media issues and a leading buyer of Tums.

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DEALS

ESPN, Starwave Form Alliance

In the largest deal in on-line history (I am not allowed to share the real figures) for a content provider and a production and publishing group, ESPN and Starwave (A Paul Allen Company) have agreed to form a multimillion-dollar alliance to bring sports enthusiasts the future of sports information.

For more than three years now I have had the good fortune of exclusively representing ESPN in the interactive rights area. I negotiated the deals with Sony for video games, with Intellimedia for ESPN instructional sports CD-ROMS, with Moon Valley for screen savers and with IVI for medical sports injury information in conjunction with the Mayo Clinic. Last year I completed the largest deal in on-line history when I put Prodigy and ESPN together for a one-year exclusive to create ESPNET, estimated at approximately \$2 million for the rights. (Only I know the real figure)

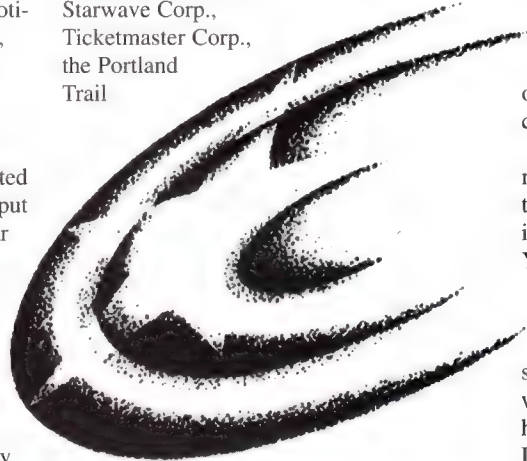
It's not often that two billion-dollar groups can get along with each other. Usually, they compete against each other. Sometime around this past Valentine's Day, I completed an absolutely sweetheart deal. On one hand, I have the world's leading sports broadcast network whom I represent. On the other hand, I have a wonderful billionaire sports fanatic and technology guy who I believe should be working with my client.

I called Paul and we spoke about ideas that I had to work with him on his new service. Paul introduced me to his lawyers and the two of us went along our merry way figuring out how to bring our clients together.

Paul's Starwave group has excellent production capabilities. They understand the

future of the Internet and were producing some rich content for their web site. They were getting ready to launch a new on-line service that would deal with numerous subjects. One of these subjects was sports.

In light of Paul's holdings in sports, I felt that it would be beneficial to my client to consider having Starwave be our production partner. Together ESPN and Starwave would combine numerous content and skills and offer the consumer the finest ESPNET On-line area imaginable. Paul brought many synergies to the table. He owns Starwave Corp., Ticketmaster Corp., the Portland Trail



Blazers and Stats Inc. He had started a very nice area on the Internet. He also owns 13+ percent of Microsoft. (Microsoft announced the Microsoft Network in the middle of our negotiations. You figure out the rest.)

ESPN has 60+ million sports viewers daily, a fantastic ESPNET service doing millions of on-line hours a year, ESPN2, SportsTicker, well-known announcers, the best sports content on the Earth and a team led by me who wanted to put these two groups together.

The arrangement would allow for new production capabilities with ESPNET. The network is busy each day preparing the best sports information for the viewing audience. It needed a group to produce our content in interactive ways for the expansion. Paul had the service and needed what I had.

I am in charge of making sure that ESPN is the Sports Solution not only on TV but also in the interactive marketplace.

It is our intent to work with Starwave to produce the finest sports information service available everywhere. It is our intent at my company to have ESPN available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on any device that you desire your information over. I hope for ESPN to be on all of the consumer on-line services.

I am very busy setting up a unique methodology for sports news. Rest assured that ESPN will be a major player in the interactive multiplayer game area on-line. You can bet that ESPN games will be available on all major PCs and game machine units in all formats.

You will all be able to receive sports games, information and other things we are planning no matter what device you have and no matter where you are located. It may sound bold, but it's the future of sports information.

In closing, by the time you read this article, newspapers and magazines all over America will have carried stories on this strategic arrangement being made between Starwave and ESPN. Look closely at what each partner can bring to the table, and you can only dream like I do about what the potential outcomes are of this fantastic deal.

.....
by Barry Friedman
President, International Computer Group





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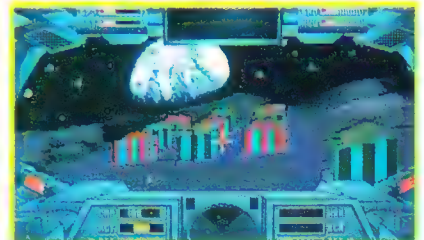


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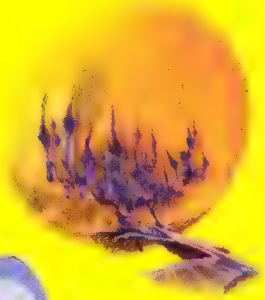
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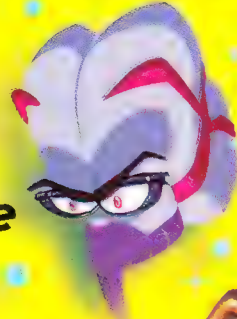
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THE KUNKEL REPORT

WCES NOTEBOOK

What if they gave a CES and no product showed up? That was the previously rhetorical question which was finally answered at WCES '95 in rain-soaked Las Vegas. Everything else was there, from the elaborate booths to the PR and marketing people, and the occasional developer (about as easy to pick out as a Munchkin at an NBA All-Star Game), to the wonderful parties and hot rumors.

But there was this nagging emptiness as one moved from appointment to appointment. Something around the edges was missing. Then it occurred: Shouldn't we be seeing some ... games?

No? Oh, well, as long as you have a T-shirt and an enamel pin ... and Penn & Teller will be at your press conference? Cool.

One problem is that January is a damned inconvenient time to be staging a trade show for the electronic entertainment industry. Every major title that could possibly be propped up for a pre-Christmas release was shot full of virtual painkillers and sent out into the jaws of **Donkey Kong Country**, which was backed by Nintendo's bold vow to buy back unsold copies from retailers.

What was left were the few games that went over their deadline, or early, non-playable glimpses of software that won't be ready to really show until May—when E³ conveniently rolls into Los Angeles for its debut show.

The rain was, of course, atypical for my adopted city. The wet stuff is (almost) always welcome here—we live in a desert, after all—but as with all nature's bounties, it can also cause problems. The first dousing after a long dry spell brings all the oil bubbling up out of the ground, transforming the street surfaces into slicks, while the drivers, accustomed to maneuvering on perfectly dry streets, instantly drop to 10 mph, turning the streets into a vapor-locked quagmire.

It wasn't pretty.

As miserable journalists trudged back and forth across the sprawling convention grounds—a trip from one of the gaming ghettos, Pavilion C, to the Multimedia Section, took approximately 30-40 minutes, depending on the foot traffic and the tenacity of the rent-a-cop security (“Turn that badge around, Dirtbag!”)—an ever-rising chant of “Never again!” could be clearly heard reverberating through the rafters of the large buildings.

Next year, preliminary word has it that the games people will be ensconced within the Sands Convention Center (which CES long resisted for political reasons because The Sands Con Center has a relationship with Comdex). But the EIA (which puts on CES) apparently noticed that its summer show had already been hijacked and decided to stop slicing off its nose and ears to spite its face.

There are two ways to look at this: 1) The EIA is finally smartening up and putting all the game people in one place or 2) we have now reached the same status as the porno video people, who were exiled to the Sahara years ago, where they continue to run their own convention alongside CES.

Yes, but will the mainstream media trudge over to the Sands to cover this dislocated segment of the show, or will they decide to shoot at the main hall and run maybe a remote or two from GameLand?

It's easy to understand the frustration of people like Sega prez Tom Kalinske, who this year reportedly demanded to know why those guys selling car radios, stereo speakers and cellular phones couldn't be shuffled off to the boonies instead of the game companies. The answer is probably seniority. Those guys *created* EIA, after all.

EIA will *never* be game people, and it seems inevitable that another game-based group like E³ will attempt to swoop in and pick off the EIA's winter show from them as well.

The CES Hot Chat Top 4

Here are the subjects that were occupying mouths and minds at the show, in no particular order:

1) The Pope/Microsoft merger was still rolling them in the aisles, but several visionaries thought it was a cool idea!

2) The rumor that China is buying all the Amigas in the world in order to create their own “People's Network” and loop in soon-to-be-reacquired Hong Kong, which is currently a loose cannon, Web-wise. An electronic Great Wall?

3) Will the Ultra 64 ship this summer or not? There's skepticism, but it *is* Nintendo.

4) The Uniserve/CompuServe GIF tempest, where the good guys and bad guys kept flip-flopping, keeping it interesting. Stay tuned!

.....
by **Bill Kunkel**

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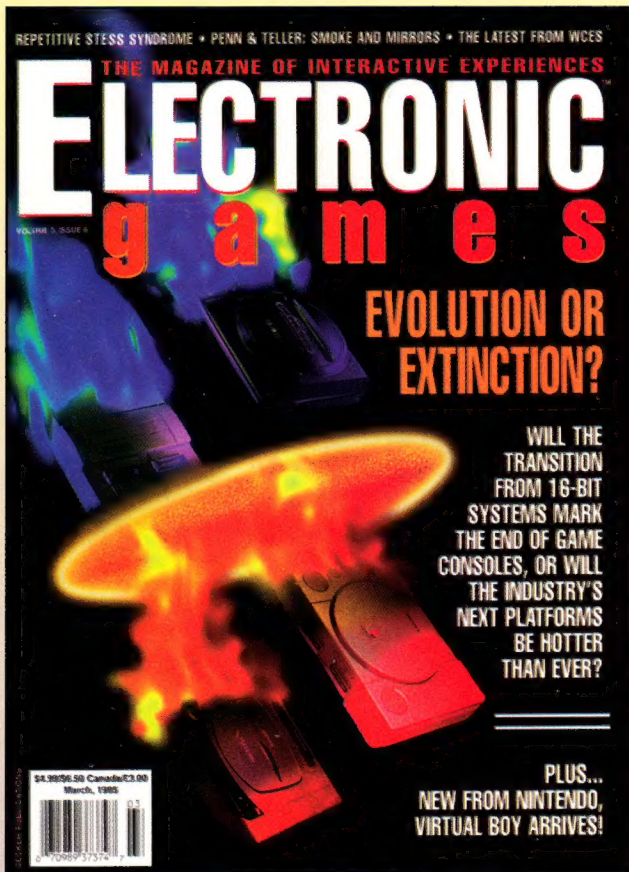
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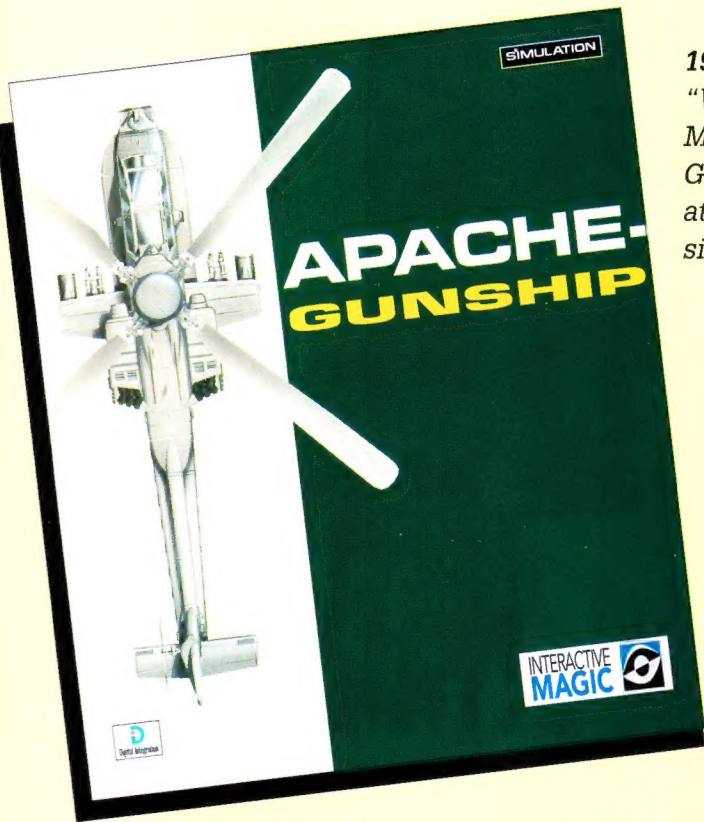
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