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THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

# ELECTRONIC

# g a m e s

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6

## EXPLORING SATURN

INSIDE SEGA'S 32-BIT WONDER



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June, 1995



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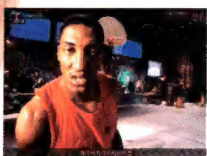
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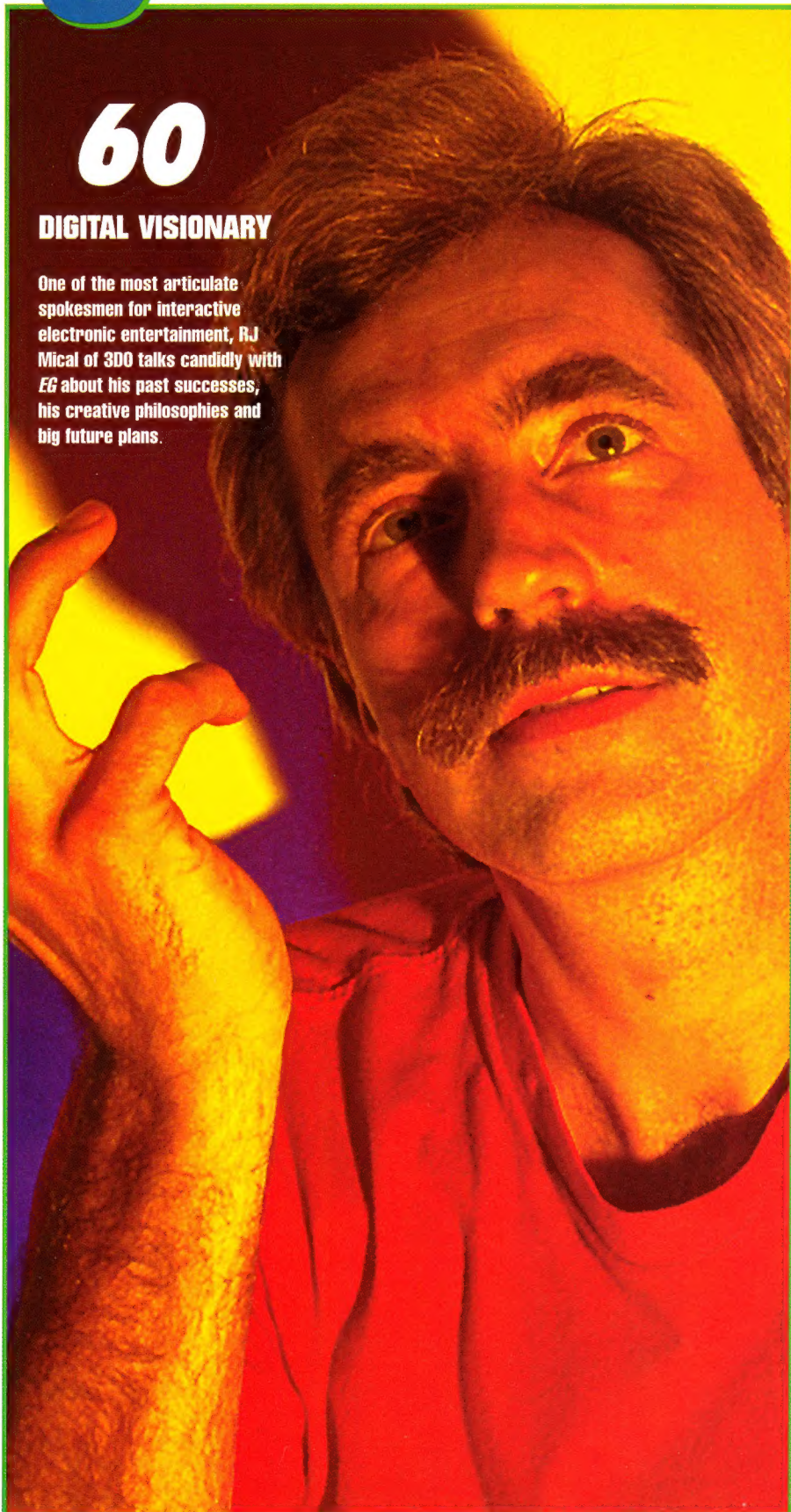
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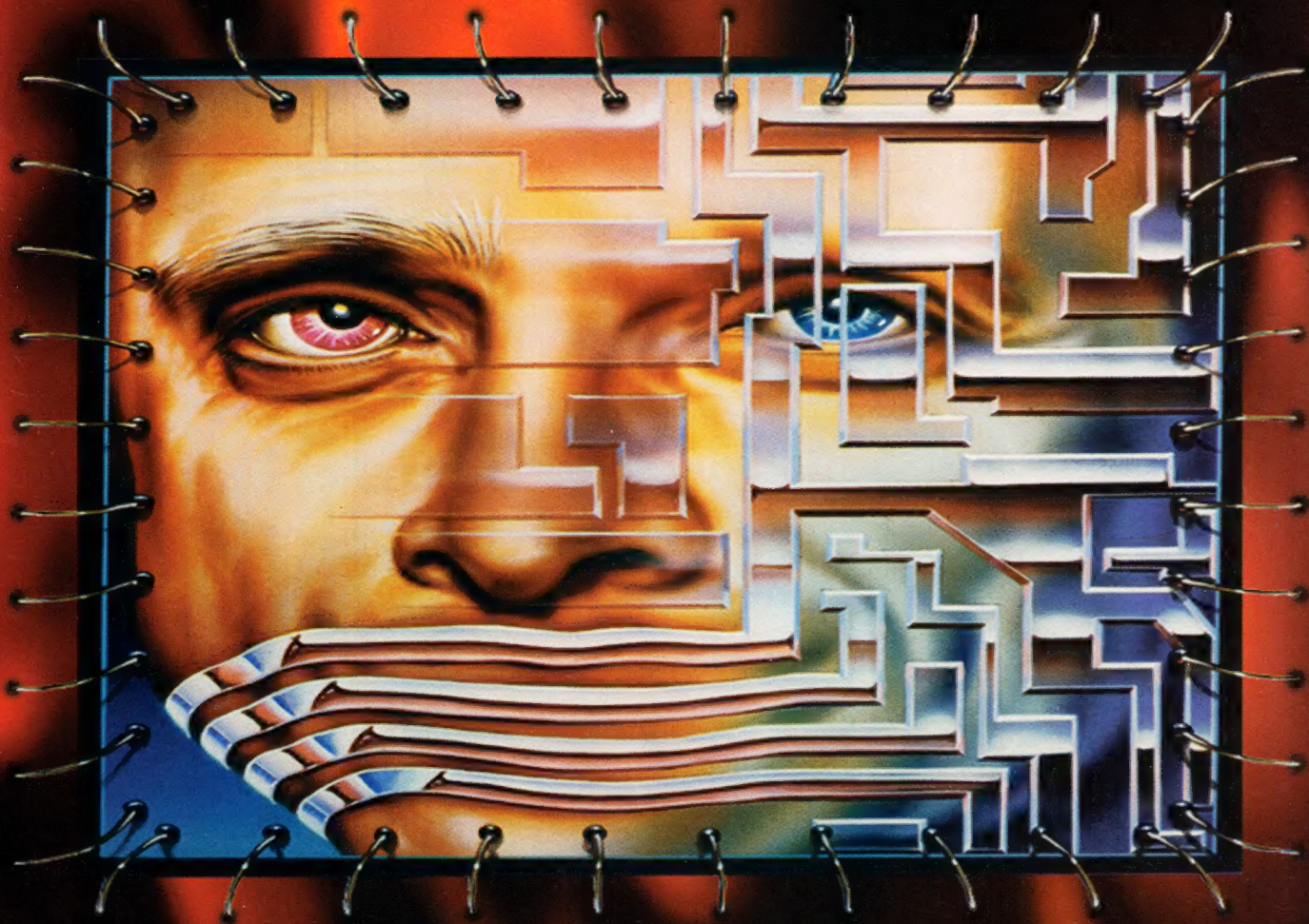
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# HARLAN ELLISON

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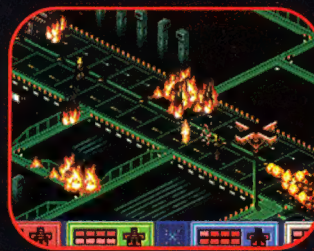
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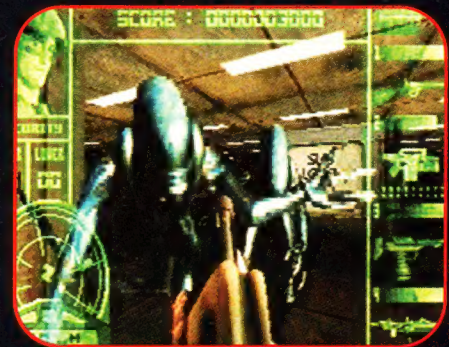
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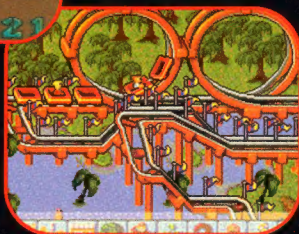
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# POWER ON

## Freedom and Decency

**T**he self-appointed guardians of public morality are on the warpath. They plan to ambush the Bill of Rights and steal a portion of every American's freedom before we even know it's gone.

Would-be censors, from Comstock to Tipper Gore, often share a perverse sincerity. They always claim to want only the best for people. Selflessly, they yearn to protect our children and uplift society. This is a laudable goal in the abstract, but their cure is worse than any disease.

Sincerity is a much-admired character trait. Alas, it's no substitute for freedom. Too many of these people sincerely want to abridge our ability to speak and write.

Somehow, these self-anointed arbiters have come to the amazing conclusion that they are wise enough to know what's best for all of us, not just themselves. They're anxious to perform this service, even if we don't particularly want them to. "It's for your own good," goes the refrain.

Parents have a duty to regulate their children's activities, and that includes surfing the Net. This editorial would be about something else if making it easier to exert parental supervision was the sole intent of the Communications Decency Act of 1995.

The sponsors of this pending legislation aren't satisfied with running their own lives. They want to deny access to everyone else, too. They insist on "protecting" everyone. Even those who don't especially want this form of Big Brotherish intervention.

Sen. James Exon (D.-NB) and Sen. Slade Gorton (R.-WA), who introduced the bill, want to give the federal government control over electronic communication to a degree never before allowed in the print and non-interactive electronic media. I want us to stop them.

The strategy: Get it passed now, while most people still don't have modems. A million new users log onto the Internet every month. It won't be long before some form of the Net touches almost every U.S. household. These legislators know that they must pass this repressive measure before enough

**“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”**

*—The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America*

voters hit the info highway or public resistance will stop it in its tracks. Supporters want to strike before a vigilant electorate awakens to the danger.

The bill, introduced in February, threatens anyone using a telecommunications device with a \$100,000 fine and a two-year jail term. That's what's waiting for anyone who "makes, transmits or otherwise makes available any comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image or other communication," material which is "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent."

Answers often depend on the phraseology of the questions. Most people oppose distribution of kiddie porn, and quite a few argue that a certain amount of government interference in citizens' lives is justifiable in pursuit of people who make and sell such disgraceful material.

Debate about the admissibility of such trash is beside the point. Kiddie porn clearly violates "community standards" of existing laws. By extension, it should be equally illegal in electronic form.

The evil of the Communications Decency Act of 1995 is that it doesn't stop at the existing boundaries or extend current law to the cyberspace. It adds nebulous, hard-to-explain terms like "filthy." Without solid, objective definitions to go by, the government gains obscene latitude in enforcement

and prosecution.

If passed, it would create a vast no man's land of intellectual content in which any pressure group can hammer people who write, draw or photograph things they don't like. It could be downloadable nudes, song lyric sheets or even a political commentary.

The misguided drive to "clean up the Internet" plays into the grasping hands of government officials who want to start reading your e-mail. That's at the bottom of the recent furor over the use of encryption technology to keep out government snoops.

The Communications Decency Act of 1995 must be defeated before it turns the electronic highway into a digital prison. If you value your freedom of expression and choice, now is the time to write to your Congressional representatives and let them know how you feel.

No one denies that Senators Exon and Gorton are entitled to propose this law. Americans have the right to be wrong-headed. But if the rest of us don't band together to battle against it, these well-meaning men will steal our freedoms away in the night. Once they are gone, we will find it exceedingly hard to get them back.

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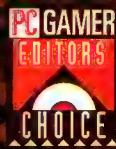
– *Dimension 3, April 1995*

You'd better bring your shootin' iron and a night light...

– *Electronic Entertainment, May 1995*

Alone in the Dark 3 is a worthy addition to the series, no doubt about it.

– *PC Gamer, May 1995*



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# FEEDBACK

## A Tale Told by a Vidiot

**A**s a 31-year-old gamer, I am proud to have been a supporter of the video game industry since those fabled early days. Yes, I was one of the trailblazin' vidiots who waited in line at the local pizza parlor for a turn at the revolutionary new **Pong**. I am also the proud owner of the very first programmable home system, the original Odyssey ITL-200 by Magnavox. I've remained faithful to the hobby, investing in nearly every system and thousands of game cartridges to date. I've experienced first-hand the industry's rise and fall and rise again, and have maintained a positive outlook for the future.

Old-timers such as myself can likely relate as I was nostalgic recalling the thrill of the early days and that bristling sense of wonder that came packaged with each new ROM cartridge. I shall never forget the near-cardiac arrest I experienced in 1982 upon plugging in **Demon Attack** by Imagic. Such arcade-level thrills had been unheard-of and unseen on the Atari 2600, and it was, to quote an old review, "manna from heaven."

What is so troubling to me—and I shudder to admit it—is that the thrill is gone. It has been many years since those quite literally sleepless nights spent awaiting the release of **Asteroids** and **Pac-Man**, and such ColecoVision treasures as **Zaxxon** and **Donkey Kong Junior**. Is it me? Have I become jaded in these days of full-motion video and virtual reality? Can there ever be another **Demon Attack**? Sadly, I think not. We've come too far and grown too big to take pleasure in such naiveté.

**William Simpson**  
Los Angeles, CA

*Sounds good, William—and welcome back to Feedback, you STD controller winner, you! You may have had greater enthusiasm over **Demon Attack** than some of us, but not an awful lot. We also played it for many hours, and can imagine we'd find it easy to do again. But some of us currently find ourselves spending many hours on recent games like **Doom** and **BreakThru**,*



*and newer classics like **Shanghai**, **SimCity** and **Tetris** (see this month's Kunkel Report). In 10 years' time we may look back and remember only those titles, just as most of us have happily forgotten **Yar's Revenge**, **ET** (or its clone, **Raiders of the Lost Ark**) and others you might just as soon have rather let slip from memory as well.*

### Exception Taken

After reading the April *Feedback's* first entry, I'm thinking this Shane Shaffer has to be an April Fools' joke. First of all, Steven Kent was on the ball with **Tempest 2000**. I mean, here's a guy who wants to see what the Jaguar can really do. **Tempest 2000** is nothing to rave about. Mr. Shaffer also made mention of **Tempest's** solidity of game play. Oh, wow! Move your character from left to right—very original!

I couldn't believe what he said, "Today's

games are garbage." Is he crazy? Games today couldn't be better! If anything is garbage, it has to be the Jaguar! It'll never win over the next-generation systems, especially Nintendo's Ultra 64.

Mr. Shaffer mentioned the arcade games **Killer Instinct** and **Virtua Fighter 2**. I'm awesome at both! What does he mean, the game play is terrible? I guess he sucks big time with fighters, so the best excuse he can come up with is the game play!

**Herman McClain**  
Van Nuys, CA

*We told Shane "Atariman" Shaffer that Steve Kent has a right to his opinion, and we repeat to you that Shaffer has the same right. One doesn't have to be poor at a game to dislike it, either. It's great that you're "awesome" at fighters; we know quite a few who are pretty much expert at them too—and know how to be critical of them when need be. As to the Jaguar and the Ultra 64, we'll see how the industry shakes them out.*

Thanks, everyone, for your correspondence. Send your letters to:

**Feedback % Electronic Games**  
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and e-mail us at: [elecgames@aol.com](mailto:elecgames@aol.com)

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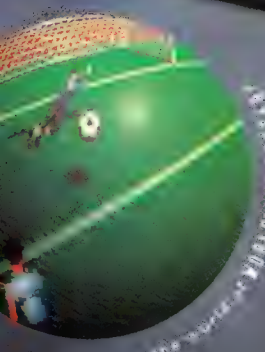
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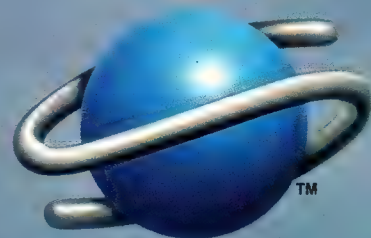
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# HOTLINE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Compiled by Joyce Worley  
& Ross Chamberlain

## Censorship On-Line

*The Communications Decency Act proposed by Senators Exon and Gorton will muzzle the Internet*

**T**here have always been well-meaning people who wished to control the actions of others "for their own good." There have always been leaders anxious to take on themselves the burden of other people's personal behavior. Some people believe that policing morality is appropriate behavior for politicians.

Senator James Exon (D-Nebraska) and Senator Slade Gorton (R-Washington) proposed an extraordinary measure to the Senate Commerce Committee, where it was accepted without debate as part of a general telecommunications bill. The Communications Decency Act is the most wide-ranging,

penalty-laden attempt to date to impose censorship that will curb our freedom of speech.

The amendment bans transmissions via any telecommunications device that makes available "any comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image or other communication" that is "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent," and imposes fines up to \$100,000 and up to two years imprisonment.

The proposed Act does not attempt to define these terms. But, what is clear is that the Act will place the government in the position of policing private communications on-line.

Senator Exon, in his statement upon introduction of the legislation, claims the Act is necessary to protect children from "inappropriate communications." The Act covers cable television, radio, telephone and "all communication including digital communication."

"Children should be protected from the pornography and smut that I fear could turn the Information Highway into a red-light district," said the senator in his statement. "My amendment to the Telecommunication Reform Bill will ... make those who would misuse a computer to

spread obscene material or harass others think twice."

Advocates opposed to the Act have pointed out that there are already systems of passwords, blockage of certain areas and lockout provisions that enable adults to control what kids can see, without instituting this barrier to freedom of speech.

To voice opinions about the Communications Decency Act, contact your own senators, and write to Senator Larry Pressler (R-South Dakota), the chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.



## The Communications Decency Act

A statement by  
Senator Jim Exon

When a youngster logs on to a computer terminal, he or she is welcomed into a vast new world of information that will revolutionize how we all learn and work in the future. This worldwide web of computer connections represents an information explosion unprecedented in world history. This information revolution may rival the inventions of the printing press and broadcasting in terms of how it will affect our daily lives. The evolving telecommunications infrastructure known as the Internet will link homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and libraries to each other and to a vast array of electronic information resources. But there are some dark side roads on the information superhighway that contain material that would be considered unacceptable by any reasonable standard.

I want to make this exciting, new highway as safe as possible for kids and families to travel. Just as we have laws against dumping garbage on the interstate, we ought to have similar laws for the information superhighway.

My amendment to the Telecommunications Reform Bill will toughen penalties for people who actively transmit pornographic or harassing material, boosting the maximum fine from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and increasing the maximum jail sentence from six months to two years. We need this added deterrent so that those who pervert the network will think twice. We already have laws to prohibit obscenity over the telephone or pornography through the mail. My amendment extends to computer users the very same protections against obscenity or harassment that now partially protect telephone users.

The legislation does not make innocent "carriers" of electronic messages liable for inappropriate messages, nor does it by any stretch of the imagination require system operators to "eavesdrop" on electronic messages. To do so would be the equivalent of holding the mailman liable for the packages he delivers.

Many critics say that on the Internet, anything should go, no matter how outrageous. I say the framers of the Constitution never intended for the First Amendment to protect pornographers and pedophiles.

There are documented cases of computer misuse all over the country. These include incidents of electronic stalking, inappropriate contact with children and computer breaking and entering.

Last summer, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that a computer at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California was being used to store and distribute hardcore pornography. Despite the lab's elaborate security precautions, investigators found more than 1,000 pornographic pictures. The computer was shut down and the FBI called in.

Computers are a unique medium because children often have much more knowledge about how they operate than their parents. My amendment would pass the standard outlined by the U.S. Supreme Court that Congress may take action to protect children from obscenity, pornography and indecency in areas like radio or television broadcasts where youngsters have unique access.

Does anyone really think that a parent can stand over their child's shoulder and monitor them all of their waking hours of every day? If anyone thinks that this material is hard for youngsters to come by, they don't know youngsters.

In a recent newspaper article, a computer hacker who viewed some of this pornography on the Internet said 98 percent of it is no worse than you might find in an adult video store. That weird admission makes my point. Is material that is okay for an adult video store okay for kids to see on their home computers?

To those who are critical of my suggestions I say, come let us reason together. Nothing is etched in stone, and I am open to any constructive proposals. I have suggested, for example, a parental lock-out mechanism as a possible solution to make certain areas of the Internet inaccessible to youngsters.

We are talking about our most important and precious commodity—our children.

## E<sup>3</sup> Sneak Peeks

**H**ere are just a few of the new programs taking home at the big entertainment expo.

**Casper** (Interplay/3DO, Sega Saturn, Sega 32X) is based on the film. The movie will use a combo of live action and computer-generated graphics, and the game will follow suit.

SGI will use some of the virtual reality sequences from *Lawnmower Man 2* in the interactive puzzle: **Lawnmower Man 2: Jobe's War**.

**Zoop** (Viacom, all systems) is an additive abstract strategy/action game; players fire at multicolored shapes that approach from four sides, with a blaster that has to color-match the target.

Mindscape will bring a line of Windows products out of Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, including screen savers, riddles and **FrontRunner '96: The Doonesbury Election Game**, an ambitious simulation that tests the campaign manager's decisions against databased voter attitudes.

New Line New Media used behind-the-scenes footage to create **Behind The Mask** (CD) with interactive features, film clips, photos, IS and interviews.

Watch for Konami's **Castlevania-Dracula X** (SNES), it's only slightly modified from the Japanese PC Engine version.

**Congo** (Viacom/PC & Mac CD) lets players interact with the novel's characters in a 3-D action-adventure through jungle, catacombs and caves.

**Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** (Viacom/PC and Mac CD) puts the player and crew on deck in an original story, done with realistic renderings.

FormGen has two new, action titles from Apogee. **Terminal Velocity** is a 3-D flight engine over the asteroids. **Duke Nukem 3D** is a 3-D sequel with Duke pursuing aliens from the moon station to L.A.

Interactive Magic previewed **Apache**, simulating the McDonnell Douglas AH-64 Apache Longbow attack helicopter.

Sega has no less than 30 32X titles under development for this year, including **Virtua Fighter**, **Zaxxon's MotherBase 2000**, **World Series Baseball All-Star** and **NBA Action**.

Accalmi went to the movies again, this time for the pirate adventure: **Cutthroat Island** (SNES, Genesis, Game Gear, Game Boy).

Capcom has a full schedule of fighters, plus an interactive movie/adventure, **Fox Hunt**, for Sega Saturn, PlayStation, PC and Mac CD.

**Top Gun: Fire At Will!** (Spectrum Holobyte/PC CD) gets a sequel that takes off from the characters' graduation from flight school, to cover new missions. There is also a **Top Gun** game under development for the Ultra 64, PlayStation.

American Laser Game is highlighting **Madison High** (PC and Mac CD, 3DO) an interactive, social adventure for girls aged 9-15.

3DO's line of games includes **BladeForce**, a futuristic, save-the-city challenge, speed up with a personal flight suit so good it makes players sneak.

THQ also liked Jim Carrey's movie enough to make **The Mask** for SNES and Genesis.

Phillips went back to Monty Python for **More Naughty Bits**.

## TALL SHIPS AND GOOD WHISKEY

Take to the high seas in a tall ship on a Prohibition era whiskey run from the Bahamas to New York in Cutty Sark Scots



Whiskey's **Virtual Voyage**, a promotion that won top place in the Kiosk/Point-of-Purchase category at the Annual Interactive Media and Marketing Awards ceremonies held at New Media Expo '95 in Los Angeles.

GreyStone Technology, Inc., Horizon Entertainment, Scaros and Casselman and Spinnaker Design shared the honors for the

development of the interactive ad, in which would-be sea captains don a VR helmet, stand at the helm of a mockup ship and encounter 2½ minutes of rough seas and high winds in the effort to deliver their precious cargo.

The promotion, which began its tour in Chicago in 1994, will continue through June.

## SAMSUNG, NINTENDO MAKE PEACE

Samsung and Nintendo agreed to end their legal disputes and resume business as usual, and to launch a cooperative antipiracy move to identify unauthorized copies of Nintendo games.

Although the two companies agreed not to discuss the case further, Nintendo acknowledged that the counterfeit software did not originate with Samsung.

## TIMES, TORSTAR IN POPCORN CHANNEL SENATE ACTS ON COMMUNICATION RESTRICTIONS

Senior officials of Torstar Corporation, parent company of The Toronto *Sontar*, say they are considering creating up to three cable television channels in Canada, including an all-news channel, in addition to an on-line service.

Other channels would be for classified advertising and theater listings, and the new services would not raise cable rates, but would be paid for with advertising revenue.

Torstar has already announced a partnership with *The New York Times* and Salter Street Films of Halifax to create the Popcorn Channel in the United States, to show numerous clips from current movies and provide local schedules.

If Popcorn is a success in the United States, it will be expanded to Canada.

A Senate panel voted to lift many of the restrictions on telephone and cable companies, a move supporters said would give consumers greater access to information as well as cheaper services. But some consumer groups say it will lead to higher cable and telephone rates and create giant companies that control access to telecommunications services, news and entertainment as well.

The proposal will free telephone and cable companies to enter businesses previously off-limits, such as networks that transmit voice, video and data.

Cable companies would hold and maintain rate regulation on lower tier services, though the rates would be deregulated for other services.

## Industry Spotlight

# DAVE ARGANBRIGHT: A PIONEER COMES FULL CIRCLE

**F**rom video games to CD-ROM, Dave Arganbright's career spans the entire history of electronic gaming.

Dave was with Philips as president of Magnavox's Odyssey Division, back in the '70s, before video games were recognized as big business. "Magnavox and Philips had a great opportunity with Odyssey, but it was never focused on as a separate business. It was looked at as part of the regular Consumer Electronics lineup.

"I, along with the rest of the Odyssey crew, convinced management that we needed to focus on Odyssey as a unique business unit. But it was kinda looked at as another television set rather than a unique business.

He explained how it started: "The first Odyssey was based on licenses Philips acquired from Sanders Corporation and Ralph Baer, going back to Pong. I got involved with the Odyssey 2, a beautiful machine with a full, alphanumeric keyboard — the only one on the market with the full keyboard."

Dave explained why the Odyssey always ran behind the Atari 2600: "We missed some key opportunities. It wasn't marketed as a video game machine, but as a consumer electronic appliance through department stores, and TV and stereo retailers. Atari, on the other hand, learned in the early days that toy stores, chains and discounters were a better place to sell game machines.

"In 1981-2, we really started to get things turned around, but by the end of 1982 it was over for the first wave of the video game business." He spoke candidly about Philips leaving the game business. "We announced an Odyssey 3 machine, but the machine was delayed for internal development reasons. It became apparent to me at least, that it was problematic whether



it would ever be delivered.

"I left the video game business and got into the videodisc business with RCA. There was a lot of interest in taking advantage of interactivity and there were a number of videodiscs that tried to take advantage of its capabilities. But, it was a little too late, and not quite slick enough. The video game consoles offered more options and could do the job better."

Although Dave got away from gaming, he stuck with interactivity. When RCA closed down the videodisc activity, Dave went to Grolier a decade ago. At that point Grolier was

actively involved in the beginnings of on-line and CD-ROM.

"We delivered the on-line encyclopedia by magnetic file. Now we're on almost all on-line services, as result of relationships set up in the mid-'80s."

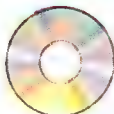
The next step was CD-ROM: "We were working to do the first CD-ROM encyclopedia. We looked at everything CD-ROM could do in 1985, and said this is what we could do off line."

Now Dave is again looking toward an interactive gaming future. "We see three major areas: the reference side, a children's line that will be everything that that means and we are getting back into the middle of the game business. We are going to focus originally on the PC CD-ROM; and look at the proprietary platforms opportunistically. We've been significantly funded by our parent company to move into the game business. We want to have top-drawer games with the development funding that implies."

Asked if he's still personally interested in electronic gaming, he replied: "When I look at the new games, I never cease to be amazed; I'm like a kid on Christmas morning." (Joyce Worley)

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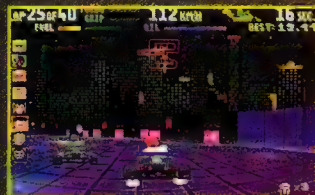
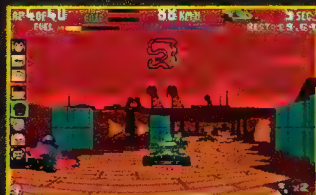


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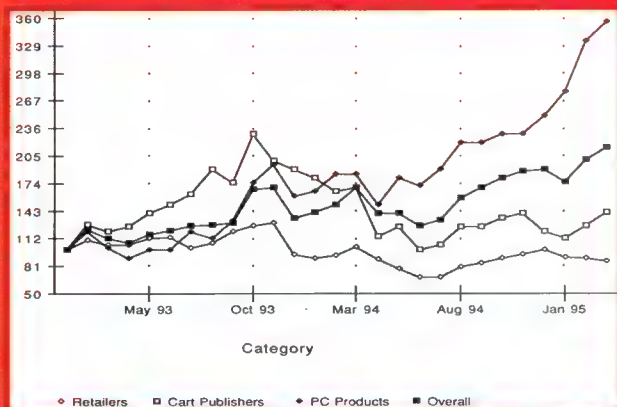
# CYBERSTOCKS WATCH

**S**tock prices of companies in the interactive electronic entertainment industry posted solid gains in March, continuing the trend that started in January. Overall, the Electronic Games Index rose almost 7 percent during the month over February's close. Gainers outnumbered losers by a 10 to 6 ratio. The cartridge publishers were the strongest group, up 12 percent, following a 12 percent gain in February. Many investors are building positions in the two industry-leading publishers Acclaim (+21 percent) and Electronic Arts (+7 percent) in anticipation of the E3 show in May, and the launch of new, advanced game platforms in the fall. Bullish sentiment has had the upper hand despite dramatic weakness in cartridge sales during the month of March, highlighted by softer than expected consumer demand for **NBA Jam Tournament Edition**. Other sectors had mixed results, with PC stocks continuing to rise (up 6.5 percent), while the retail group eased 1.7 percent.

Individual winners include 3DO, up 42 percent as rumors circulated both in the trade and on Wall Street that a major strategic partner would either license the technology, buy stock or both. News of this type can have a disproportionate impact on share prices of stocks with large short positions, a common characteristic of ERTS, AKLM and THDO. Rising 24 percent in the month were both Davidson Associates on strong computer hardware and software sell-through reports and NeoStar Retail Group (the merger of Babbages+Software Etc.) after year-end results were released. Other PC-related stocks posted excellent gains, including America On-Line (+21 percent as investors cheered rising subscriptions and a strategic alliance with Bertelsman), Spectrum HoloByte (+19 percent despite the announcement that **Star Trek: TNG** would not be shipped in the March quarter), Sierra On-Line (+13 percent) and Creative Technologies (+10 percent).

Stocks losing ground in March included Egghead Software (down 21 percent on concerns about margins and slower than expected rollout of a new format rose chain), Funco (off 19 percent as investors reflect concerns about eroding consumer enthusiasm for cartridge games, new or used) and Activision (down 15 percent). WMS shares dropped 5 percent on concerns about March quarter earnings and Comq USA was down 4 percent.

April and May could prove to be volatile months for many of the stocks in this industry. Most software publishers, including EA, Spectrum and Sierra will report year-end results, and provide guidance for the summer and coming year. Key trends will continue to be cartridge sales and consumer PC purchases, with perhaps an additional element of seasonality. Speculation will also influence share prices as investors attempt to anticipate news to come out of E3. (John G. Taylor)



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

## 2DELL SEES SUPER PCS

According to Michael Dell, chairman and CEO of Dell Computer Corp., future computers will be more intelligent and able to predict what the user wants to do. Dell sees the PC of the future as an all-in-one that can handle wireless phone calls, faxes, video, voice and paging.

"You'll have just one computer—smaller, lighter, more powerful and less expensive than today's notebooks. You'll use just one phone number to send and receive all communications ... the PC will refine, filter, access, sort and assimilate information," he predicted.

## SIERRA GETS RAMA

Sierra signed a long-term partnership with Gentry Lee, science-fiction novelist and NASA engineer, and licensed the rights to develop interactive multimedia titles based on *Rama II*, *The Garden of Rama* and

*Rama Revealed*, written by Arthur C. Clarke and Lee.

"Multimedia is the future and I'm ecstatic to be designing games for Sierra," said Gentry Lee. "They have proven that they know game development and I'm looking forward to working with the fantastic talent that has helped to make them so successful."

Lee, formerly chief engineer for Project Galileo and director of Advanced Programs, Solar System Exploration for NASA, will be designing a sequel to **Outpost**, a simulation of building a colony on a hostile planetary surface.

## DID YOU KNOW...

Remember the controversy when Vanguard's American history program was criticized for discussions of homosexuality, abortion and other hot topics? Apple solicited educators for input, and continued distribution to secondary but not primary schools. ... Less than 10 percent of Pentium owners bothered to get a replacement for the flawed Intel chip.

# ACCLAIM STUDIO'S DAY: TAKE 2

**R**ecently, Acclaim Entertainment shipped 40 inrepid journalists deep through the heart of semirural Long Island, to their new 70,000-sq. foot headquarters in the small town of Glen Cove, NY, for an E3 preview. In a commandeered movie theatre, Acclaim bigwigs discussed the company's new digs, plans for the future and the details of upcoming games, before taking reporters on a safari to the "very current" Ultimatte and motion-capture studios.

Product Manager Ken Heidman and Director of Product Development Col Stone talked about Judge Dredd. The story line has seven levels based on the Sylvester Stallone action flick and five levels from the DC comic book. To spice up the action, there's a

LawMaster (Dredd's hyperthyroidal motorcycle) driving sequence.

Batman Forever is Acclaim Coin-op's first project, scheduled for September. It has Batman and Robin in two-player cooperative mode and a two-player competitive mode where gamers fight as characters from the Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones and Jim Carrey vehicle.

According to Chairman and CEO Gregory Fischbach, Acclaim budgets \$40-60 million to develop and launch each game. In following the movie studio model, Acclaim has become a hit-driven enterprise, gambling that big licenses become big money earners—a treacherous road to travel but a profitable one if successfully navigated. (John Hardin)

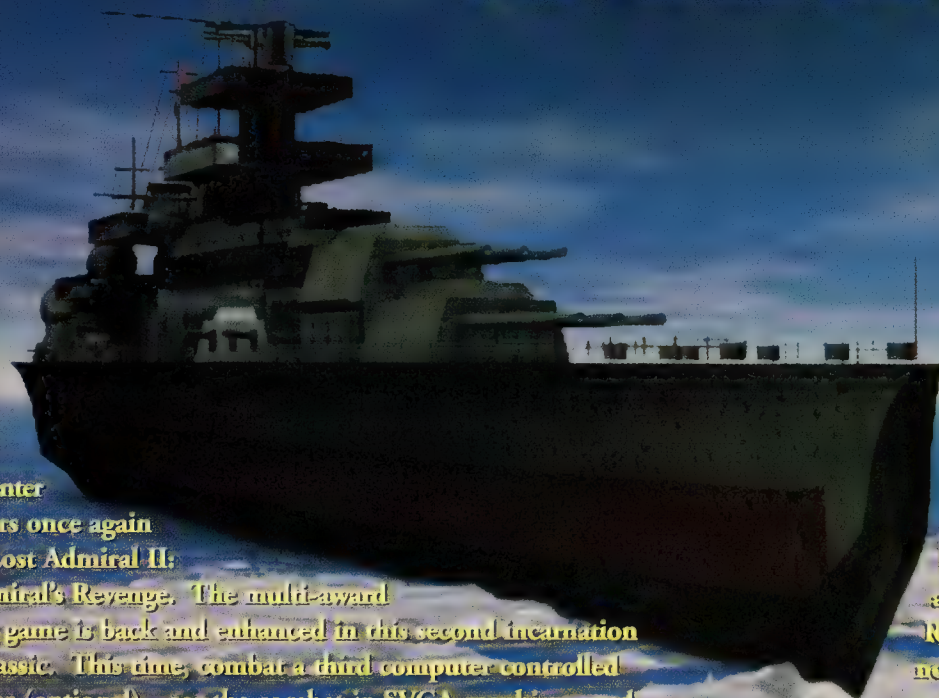
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- Random Map Generator
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- Improved Player History of your Combat Endeavors
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- Land Units to take Inland Cities
- Random Events
- A 3rd Player Interloper for that Extra Challenge
- Flagships with Special Abilities

# THE LOST ADMIRAL

## The Admiral's Revenge



Dare to enter the waters once again in **The Lost Admiral II: The Admiral's Revenge**. The multi-award winning game is back and enhanced in this second incarnation of the classic. This time, combat a third computer controlled interloper (optional) ...see the combat in SVGA graphics ...and play against a human adversary over MODEM. Utilize the land troops as well as your naval fleet to combat the improved AI and try to regain your name.

Stealthily, maneuver your submarines through enemy lines to prepare for the all out attack on your adversary. Run a tight ship, but it still will not be easy to conquer the world ...this time it's not just personal ...it's a matter of life or death.

The pre-designed maps are monumental, the randomly generated scenarios are tremendous and the campaigns round out a titanic gaming experience. Your progress is tracked all along the way with full player history tracking.

**QQP**

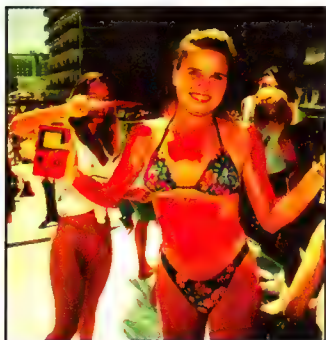
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## NINTENDO PAINTS THE BEACH LOUD THROUGH WWW BY PHONE & FAX

Launching their new "Play it Loud" line of Game Boys, Nintendo painted Daytona beach red, yellow, green and black, at the Play It Loud launch party. Painted Bodies of Spring Break was the theme as vacationing coeds competed for the crown of "Fastest Body Painter." Play it Loud Game Boys were awarded to the winners and a few lucky audience members. Now that's fun in the sun!



Starting this summer, navigation of the World Wide Web will be opened to folks who fax. Universal Access, a California Internet access provider and software developer, created a service called WebFax, intended mainly for information retrieval. Members can phone WebFax and then enter identification numbers for various websites via their touchtone keypads. They'll receive fax pages with printed-out text and graphics for those sites. Where hypertext would appear on the computer screen, there are special ID numbers that may be punched in to obtain the linked documents.

Price of the service includes a one-time \$25 activation fee plus \$7.77 per month basic membership fee. Phone charges are not covered. Advantages are to companies not wishing to open up their systems to outside access.

## BIZ DEALS

**M**itGott made a deal with Nintendo to supply 3-D development tools for the Ultra 64.

Shiny Entertainment and Activision will jointly develop an action game for the Sega Saturn, PlayStation and Ultra 64. They also agreed that Activision will publish **Earth-worm Jim** in a version for Windows '95. ... B&E, maker of **Double Talk** board and computer games, acquired IDP Software, getting title to their **Strategy Game**.

**Organization Game and Extinction**. ... NEC invested in VideoLogic and agreed to jointly develop advanced 3-D and virtuality games for homes, arcades and theme parks. ... Niacom's Simon & Schuster unit purchased a 20 percent equity stake in Byron Press Multimedia Co. Inc. for

about \$6 million and will co-publish CD-ROM products, starting with **The American Heritage Multimedia History of the Civil War**, based on Bruce Catton's book.

Gameltek got a three-year extension on their license to **Jopardy!** and **Wheel of Fortune**. ... Bertelsmann Music Group signed an agreement with DMA (Uniracers, Walker, Lemmings) Design to develop four titles for PC and next-generation consoles. ... Electronic Arts bought a stake in Visual Concepts (**Desert Strike**, **Clayfighter**, **Tazmania**) Entertainment. Visual will develop software for the new platforms exclusively for EA. ... IndieProd (the film company that did **Universal Soldier**) merged with Konigsberg, the TV production company.

## Industry Spotlight

# DR. JAN DAVIDSON: GURU OF ED-WARE

**T**here's no one in this industry who's had a more profound effect on education, but Dr. Jan Davidson, president and founder of Davidson & Associates, entered the software business quite by accident.

Dr. Jan was trying to figure out how to make education more appealing to learners when she became interested in computers in the late '70s. "I got an Apple II with 48 K memory. I was really advanced because I had a disk drive."

But there were only a few software products on the market, and she didn't like what she saw.

"Every time a child made an error it caused a beep. I asked a programmer to go in and take out that beep. When a kid made a mistake the whole room knew; that was just horrible.

That was when the programmer said to me, 'You know, I could do more than that,' and we started correcting misspelled words, and then, 'Why don't you tell me what you want and I'll try to write the code?' That's how we got started.

"We did the little games that were in the first version of **Math Blaster**. ... In about three years the products evolved to become **Word Attack**, **Math Blaster** and **Speed Reader**."

Dr. Jan is enthusiastic about the future of computer learning: "We are lifelong learners, not just K-12 or K-college, but all our life. The computer will be a way for all of us to continue our learning process.

"In the K-12 marketplace, pretty much all the curriculum material now delivered by textbook will be delivered via technology, much of it coming over the wire. Textbooks are not very useful tools in this information age, because they are out of date before



most students use them. It takes two to four years to even get a textbook developed, and it's in the classroom seven to nine years.

"With technology you can get up-to-date, relevant to our world, curriculum materials delivered on-line. You can change content in technology much easier than in the textbook."

Dr. Jan still keeps a personal hand on educational software. "When my husband joined the corporation in '89, our agreement was that I would focus on R&D, the product development side, and he would focus on getting the product to market and the financial side."

She still spends more than 50 percent of her time running product development and interacting with children who playtest. "I stay as close to the kids as I can; I attend more focus groups than anyone, because I attend everyone's focus group. The other part that is really fun to me is to help other people grow to do some of the things I did. I still feel like a teacher, giving people the opportunity to grow and develop. And that's satisfying."

Looking to the future: "I remember when I got excited we could do lower-case letters. With CD-ROM, we can put speech and sound in, and graphics. ... We can make much more involving programs and build learning modalities that adapt to the individual child. Some of us are affected more by visuals, others by sound. ... we can build products that are more student-centered."

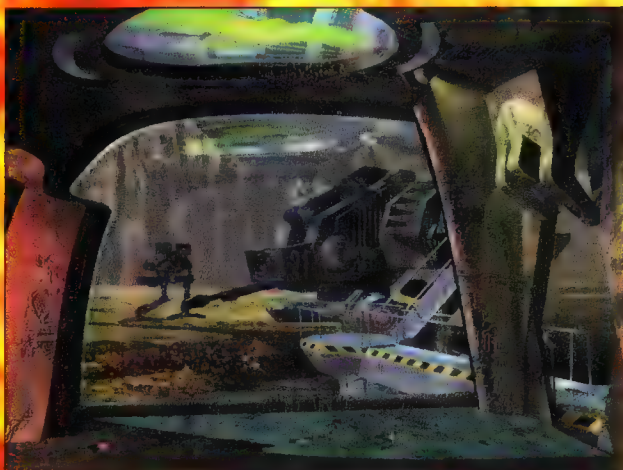
As one of the most important people in education, Dr. Jan is often asked to give advice for young people. What she tells them defines her own professional life: "Don't think in terms of careers, but of passions. ... what do you really love? Try to pursue something you care about; it will lead to a much more satisfying life."

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# CYBERWATCH

## Holy War on the Infobahn?

**T**he Net may be largely secular, but religious elements have certainly begun to creep into the computer era, with the arrival of both SATAN and a Roman Catholic-style confessional program within one month.

First, we have a new piece of security software that was released freely into the Net on April 15, 1995, and that, according to AP reporter Catalina Ortiz, has computer security professionals uttering profanities galore. Could it be ... SATAN? In this case, that's exactly what it is; SATAN (or Security Administrators Tool for Analyzing Networks) is "a new piece of software designed to find security gaps in computer systems and make them harder to crack." Created by Dan Farmer, the program has security pros tweaking with the expectation that hackers will use the system to execute break-ins, but Farmer demurs: "As far as abuse goes, I think it will actually decrease because people can make better decisions about improving their security."

While the war against SATAN rages, there is now also the possibility of silicon expiation. According to *The Hartford Courant* (3/11/95), Greg Garvey, an assistant professor of design art at Concordia University in Montreal, has developed the "Automatic Confession Machine" or "ACM," a "computerized booth that allows sinners to come clean by picking from a menu of the seven deadly sins and the Ten Commandments ... the ACM asks the confessor about his transgressions before prescribing ... penance." Unfortunately, according to its creator, the ACM can be a little draconian in assigning penance. "Garvey says his machine tends to be a little more heavy-handed with the Hail Marys than your average priest. Instead of three, you might be ordered to say 300." Therefore, Garvey recommends his "Personal Pocket Penance Assistant, which is a handheld device ... [that will] say your penance ... automatically. Perfect for the busy sinner on the go."

"The only people that have [the right to



be] upset about O.J. Simpson must be the Florida Citrus Growers. They would pay him any money if he would just change his name to Snapple Simpson."

—Paul Rodriguez (Prodigy)

"Thrilled by all the controversy surrounding the bug in Intel's Pentium processor, Kurt [Glaesemann] decided to jump into the fray on the Internet newsgroup comp.sys.intel. But then he posted a message comparing the Pentium bug to being shot: 'Being shot is rare and affects relatively few people, but if you're the person who gets shot, it really sucks.' Kurt says his comment was misread as a death threat against Intel president Andy Grove, causing the FBI to send an agent to Kurt's Ames, IA, home."

—"Open Folder" *MacUser* 5/95

"Another formidable ally [in the DreamWorks project] is Microsoft's [Bill] Gates, whose tactical pitches include the hardball and the spitball. 'Microsoft doesn't take no for an answer,' [Jeffrey] Katzenberg says. 'If they can't come in through the front door, they'll come in through the back door. Or the cellar or the attic. That's what they do. Well, so do we. So I respect that.' Yet Gates' prodding of Katzenberg during a

January meeting in Las Vegas nearly scuttled the software deal. As Spielberg recalls, 'When Jeffrey said it took 400 animators to do *The Lion King*, Bill asked, "Can't you cut that down to 40 people and do the rest on computers?" Jeffrey misunderstood Bill. He wasn't turning up his nose at creativity; he was putting us to the test.'

—"Hey, Let's Put on a Show!" *Time* 3/27/95

"The latest [gambling] machines coming off the assembly lines at Nevada's major manufacturing plants offer many games of chance from just one machine. ...

"Multigame machines, which are becoming available from several of the major manufacturers, allow customers to play a variety of games ... without leaving the machine.

"The machines are expected to appeal to the next generation of casino customers; those who grew up playing with Nintendo and personal computers..."

—Monica Caruso, "Manufacturers Prepare for the Nintendo Generation of Gamblers," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 3/12/95

by Bill Kunkel and Laurie Yates

# Mind Bending!

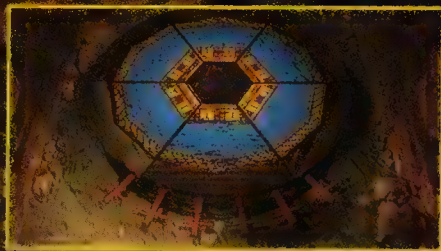
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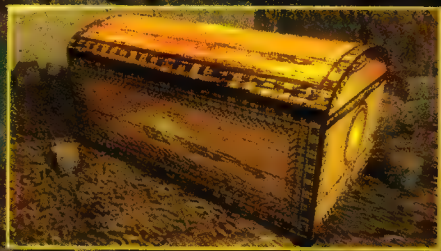
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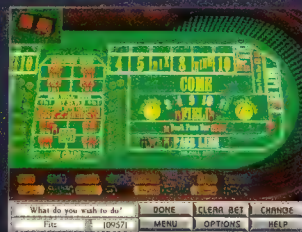
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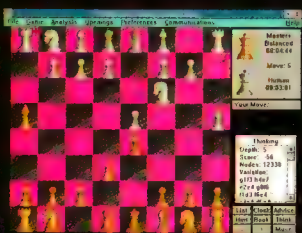
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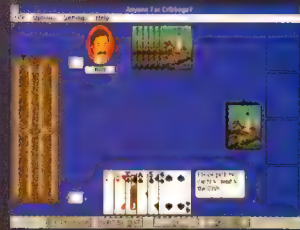
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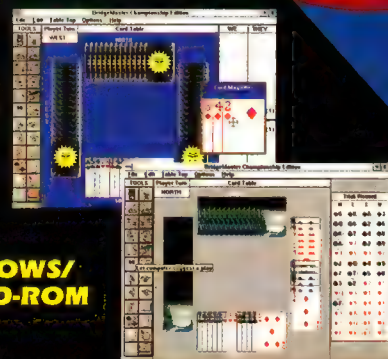


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# GAME DOCTOR

## The Big Questions of Our Time

Welcome home, troubled gamers. The use of America OnLine as a send-off point for questions has paid major dividends with lots of great questions. So the Game Nurse has been running her buns off this month, and while we reorganize our system, I feel I should answer a couple of questions that have been annoying all of us for several months now. Frankly, we've been dogging it on producing conclusive research as to the "Genesis" of the number "2600" on the old Atari VCS/2600. I feel we have also been less than conclusive in confronting the question of why video games can't generate better resolution on standard TVs.

So let's abandon our traditional Q&A formula and get some hard facts nailed down on these two issues so I can sleep at night.

**Question 1:** How did the Atari VCS come to be called the 2600?

This was the toughest nut the Doc's had to crack since that Vectrex business back in the Jurassic period. It began with an innocent-looking letter from this well-intentioned fellow in Chicago with a damned good question. Now it's several months later, and my years of hard-won game cred are on their way down the toilet. One reader even challenged me over e-mail to answer the damn question, claiming to know that the number 2600 was chosen because of its numerological importance within the world of phone phreakdom and high-level electronics.

So I knocked the dust off my P.F. Flyers and actually left the office—something the Doc has only done to eat, gamble, golf or hot tub since moving to the great American Southwest over half a decade ago—to the great astonishment of the Game

Nurse and several patients who had begun to fuse to the slipcovers on my old couch.

First, I focused on this issue of "2600" as a primal number, sort of the "666" of electronic gaming. Electricians were no help, but someone higher up the electronics food chain suggested it was the number of Hz that, when run through those old blue boxes so popular among phone phreaks a couple decades back, would zero out one's phone bill. (Alert: a Prize Packet to the first reader who can tell me the saga of "Captain Crunch" and how he got his name.)

Now that was interesting.

In fact, it was almost mythic. Other consultants seemed to shore up the theory, claiming that 2600 was a well-known number within the upper echelon of electronics

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wizards. "There was even a magazine with that name," one source suggested. "Maybe still is." (2600 is still around and still giving sysops nightmares.) This was getting seriously gooooooood!

Then reality came crashing down. I had been bugging the hell out of poor Dick

Lehrberg—the electronics buyer at

Sears in 1978 who saved Atari, then moved on to become one of the cornerstones of the



industry—who felt certain that the number was meaningless. "We never even called it the 2600," he remembered. "That was just its shipping number, CSX2600 or something like that. It wasn't until the ColecoVision came out and Atari had to launch a next-generation system that we looked at the number and decided to double it and make the next model the Atari 5200—and then the 7800, and so on. No one thought anything about it until we needed a number, at which point we started calling it the 2600."

Yes, Dick, it all sounds so ...

facile. But where did the original numbering of 2600

come from? Surely, they didn't pluck it from a hat? Unfortunately, Dave Crane, the big killjoy, had a squelcher for even that seemingly mystical question: "I believe Atari produced 25 products before the VCS—Pong systems, Video Pinball, stuff like that. So the VCS was probably the 26th; it needed a shipping number, so it became the 2600."

That's where we stand today. I feel that on an issue as important as this one, we must all draw our own conclusions.

*Question 2: We hear an awful lot about the "brick wall" that game creators run into when designing games which must be played on standard TV sets. Doesn't the fact that the regular imagery we see on broadcast TV looks better than the electronic games we play on those same sets prove it's just a question of the game systems not having sufficient processing power?*

The Doc totally stepped aside on this one and left it to my consultant, Dr. Raj, who assures us that we are being paranoid about this. "There is, in fact, a very serious limit in the resolution a TV can produce. For U.S. systems (NTSC) the limit is about 550 x 550 (pixels per cm are not the same for both directions). The reason why it always seems the other way around is one of bandwidth. The TV circuitry has very low bandwidth so it tends to smooth the finer lines out. Thus, you cannot see jagged edges and stuff (they get smoothed out) and that gives the illusion of better resolution. The only real test for resolution is a TV test card." In other words, because TV res is so fuzzy, it looks smoother, while the lines on game-generated images are so sharp we can see the pixelated edges!

Thank you, Dr. Raj.

And that's a wrap for this issue, gang. Next time out, we'll tackle the question of what, exactly, is the international language of the Net/WWW and other cool questions.

To send your queries by snail mail, write to:

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Nurse@aol.com and that's a big Aloha, dear readers.

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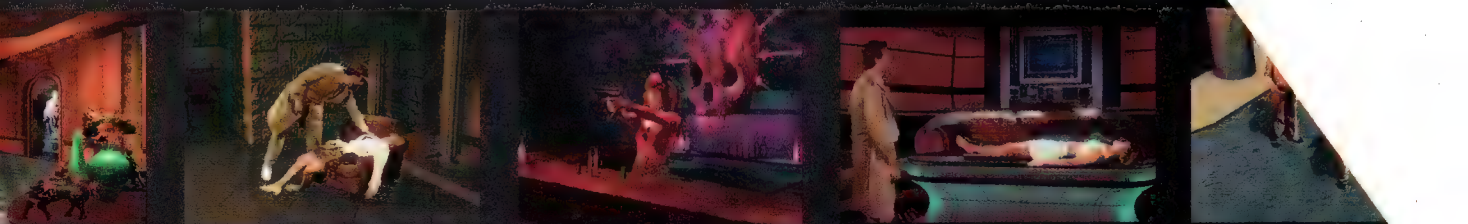
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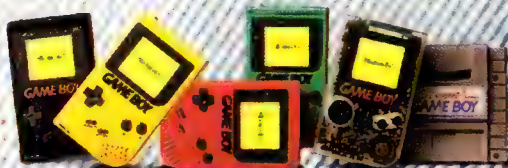
Kirby swallow under water. Kneel before

the hamster that coughs up white-hot spheres

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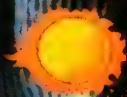


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SEGA'S ARMY TEAM, FROM LEFT:  
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TERRY TANG, MIKE WEISBERG AND NEMER VELASQUEZ

# FROM SATURN



By The Editors Of Electronic Games

# SATURN STAKES A CLAIM

## THE MULTIMEDIA CONSOLE BRACES FOR THE CONSUMERS' VERDICT

It's hard to think of Sega of America as an underdog. SoA is a major component of a cash-rich, billion-dollar entertainment colossus. Still, many experts expressed skepticism about Sega's entry into the multimedia console market, the Saturn. Clearly, Sega has beaten longshot odds to rank as a major contender in the fast-developing multimedia console battle royal.

Sega applied a lot of people and money to the problem of a cutting-edge game machine, code-named Saturn, to supersede the Genesis. The project's first fruits weren't encouraging. Many initially sized up the Saturn as an expensive machine with capabilities inferior to its prospective rivals.

Saturn's early problems began with a media perception that the machine wasn't as strong as some of its rivals. Sony's PlayStation impressed many in its behind-the-curtain debut, and analysts couldn't discount Nintendo, even though the Ultra 64 was little more than a vague rumor.

Pricing concerned the industry, too. No one wanted a \$600-plus game-player, even if it had multimedia sound and graphics. The first prototype also appeared resistant to economies of scale, because of the composition of the chip set. This raised the fear that the Sega Saturn would be left all on its lonesome, hundreds of dollars more expensive than anything else of comparable quality.

The software, **Virtua Fighter** and **Ridge Racer** shown in rough form, didn't blow away sneak-peeking editors. They weren't at all bad, but they didn't seem fresh or exciting enough to lead a new platform into the market.

Although the company probably wouldn't admit it, the 32X upgrade to the Genesis also posed difficulties. No hardware manufacturer has ever successfully maintained a two-level marketing strategy, so some feared that the 32X would undermine the Sega

Saturn's place in the retail market.

The occupational disease of electronic gaming journalists is impatience with the future. It's understandable, perhaps, in such a forward-facing business. Whatever the reasons, the competition for scoops and headlines sometimes causes attempts at premature burial. In a desire to be first with a big story like a platform going belly up, some journalists ring the death knell way too soon.

That is certainly the case with the Sega Saturn. There are five major new consoles, all of them multimedia. Sure winners are only a little harder to predict than guaranteed losers, but Sega Saturn is now a lock to make the Final Three.

Close-ups on the following pages describe the specifics of hardware and software development, but the general pattern is unmistakable: Sega looked objectively at its multimedia project and made the needed decisions.

On the eve of its late-summer debut, the Sega Saturn has already surmounted most of its potential obstacles. Sega improved the development system, refined the unit's construction and started to develop software as innovative as the hardware. **Panzer Dragoon**, undoubtedly owes something to the classic **Space Harrier**, but its audiovisuals, first-person intensity and involving strategy are strictly state-of-the-art mid-1990s.

The two-level strategy must still prove itself. SoA has boosted its chances to pull off this marketing miracle by more precisely positioning the 32X as an accessory rather than a platform. Its tight focus on arcade-style action and sports for the Sega Saturn also separates it from the 32X.



## Survival Report

There are, most likely, only three chairs available for the five main players. That makes the multimedia console market quite a scary game of musical chairs for Sega, Nintendo, Sony, 3DO and Atari.

As the Sega Saturn roll-out starts, it's time to assess its chances. It will come in as the highest-priced machine, but the difference between it and the PlayStation won't be as large as predicted a year ago. The public's reaction to the first wave of software will do much to determine if the price gap has narrowed enough.

The Sega Saturn software looks and plays a lot better than some cynics expected. This *has* to make a difference in a crowded field, so expect **Panzer Dragoon**, in particular, to sell some systems.

The yen's movement against the dollar imperils price relief on the hardware. In fact, monetary fluctuations (*see sidebar in this section*) could make a shambles of the entire industry's pricing structure. Until the five manufacturers react to the situation, however, speculation about retail tags is fruitless.

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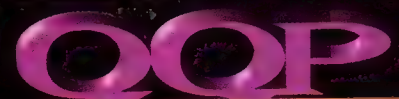
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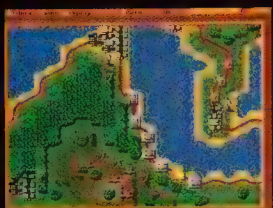
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# PUZZLING OUT THE HARDWARE

by Ed Dille

Is there a secret to engineering the perfect video game system? Each of the major hardware manufacturers would certainly claim that is the case. Further, that their solution is the end all; the Holy Grail gamers have been waiting for. Most consumers would recognize these claims for what they are, marketing dollars at work, but there will always be a few for whom the pitch transcends the performance.

After these early adopters propel the new system into the mainstream, the sell becomes a little more difficult. The balance of video game consumers are not unlike car shoppers; some will drive "Betsy" until she literally falls apart (witness the large number of 8-Bit Nintendo cartridges routinely swapped at flea markets across the country), others will trade in their old model on a newer one every three to five years. Despite some reduction of the potential market for the Sega Saturn by Jaguar and 3DO, not to mention Sega's own interim measures like the 32X, the fact remains that there are a large amount of potential console consumers about to go on the market in that three- to five-year cycle.

Sega is counting on this, and the timing of their release of the Sega Saturn seems to be right. Nevertheless, market timing is only one piece of the equation. As in the automobile industry, the proof is in the performance. Further, performance of a design must show a balance between style and substance, or power. Put a Testerosa engine in a Yugo and you have a powerful machine without style.

Put a Yugo engine in a Testerosa and you have a stylish machine with no power.

Video game engineering is no different. The console design establishes the power of the system. Software design implements that power to varying degrees and establishes the style of the system. Herein, *EG* "test drives" the Sega Saturn to rate the power and potential of this new system. This analysis will make no claims about the eventual style that software engineers will implement. *EG* must note, however, that software support has always been the deciding factor in whether or not new hardware enters the market with a bang or a whimper. With that firmly established, let's peek under the hood of the Sega Saturn and put her through some paces.

Starting at the surface and working deeper, the first impression Sega Saturn players have is that the visual presentation of the machine exceeds much (but not all) of what they have seen in the past from pure consoles. For example, both the Sega Saturn and the Jaguar have a palette of 16.8 million colors; and both are capable of 720-x 576 resolution, but the Jaguar achieves this on a regular TV while the Sega Saturn requires HDTV for this performance. On a regular TV, Sega Saturn displays at 320 x 224.

Both 3DO and Sega CD achieve 320 x 200.

So what sets the top-level presentation of the Sega Saturn apart? How about that it is capable of rendering 200,000 texture-mapped polygons per second, or 500,000 flat-shaded polygons per second? Granted, this is still somewhat shy of the 690,000 flat-shaded polygons per second that an MGA Impressions Plus is capable of at twice the resolution on a PC, but remember, folks, we are talking about a stand-alone console. To understand how these fairly impressive numbers are generated, and also more about the other features of the Sega Saturn, let's go inside the block diagram depicted in the accompanying figure and get down to the specifics.

The Saturn features two 32-Bit, 28 Mhz Hitachi SH2 RISC chips in a master/slave configuration. Both chips have access to 2 MB of RAM (in addition to 512k of Boot ROM) and each chip is capable of performing DMA functions. Because of the master/slave configuration, however, both SH2 chips must share the same BUS, so one must wait if the other is currently accessing the BUS. Each SH2 has a 4KB cache to help ease BUS conflict, and the cache can either be configured as a 4KB 4 way write through unified cache, or 2KB 2 way cache with 2KB of private work RAM.



THE TECHNICAL TEAM FROM LEFT: DAN POLING, GAIL TSUJITA, RENEE GREENWOOD, JIM HUETHER AND MARTY FRANZ

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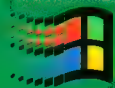
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In addition to these processors, the Sega Saturn features another RISC chip, the SH1, which is dedicated to the CD sub-system. This independent processor runs at 20 Mhz and contains its own 512k RAM buffer to cue data from the double-speed CD-ROM drive for further processing by the SH2 x 2 main architecture. The CD-ROM drive is capable of reading the following formats: CD+G, Red Book Audio, Yellow Book CD-ROM and CDX-A. The SH1 is tied to the SCU (see below) via the "A" BUS.

Yet another processor, the SMPC, controls the functions of all peripherals. This 4-Bit Hitachi micro-controller regulates a real-time clock and runs continuously using battery power when the system is shut off. The SMPC allows the SH2 processors to access peripherals directly or indirectly and also regularly polls for and buffers the latest information from peripherals. Additionally, the SMPC is capable of resetting the entire system or individual chips as required.

The System Control Unit (SCU) ties together all of the functions of the SMPC, SH1 and SH2 chips on the CPU side of the "B" BUS. Think of the SCU as the "glue" that holds the entire architecture together. The SCU controls both BUSES, allowing integration of "A" BUS and "B" BUS data flow to produce one contiguous memory map for the SH2 processors. The SCU manages three DMA channels, serves as an interrupt controller and has a separate 14 Mhz DSP (with 2K RAM) dedicated to the efficient, precise math functions used in matrix calculations.

On the opposite side of the "B" BUS, one finds both the video and sound processors,

that perform the balance of the Sega Saturn's magic trick. The sound sub-system includes a custom SCSP chip that combines a PCM/FM sound source and sound exclusive DSP. The sound sub-system also has a 68EC000 chip running at 11.3 Mhz, which can be programmed for 3-D sound and other effects. A 16-Bit Digital/Audio Converter (DAC) converts up to 32 voices from the PCM/FM synthesis slots into 44.1 Khz CD-quality audio. What does that translate to for the layman? The Sega Saturn's sound quality is crisp, clean and first rate, limited only by the speakers on one's television.

To avoid the common bottlenecks associated with video processing, the Saturn segregates these functions between two semi-independent processors, VDP1 and VDP2. VDP1 is the sprite processor and displays polygons and other shapes called "parts" independently of the backgrounds displayed by VDP2. Parts can be either textured or non-textured. A textured part can be composed of 15-Bit RGB values (32,768 colors), palette offsets (256 entries) or entries in a 16-color CLUT (Color Lookup Table). VDP1 can also perform a special effects set which closely replicates that of the 3DO video processor, including Gouraud shading, shadowing, half luminance and half transparency. Finally, VDP1 enjoys 512k of Texture RAM on a dedicated BUS and also manages two frame buffers, allowing one buffer to be filled while the other buffer is being displayed by VDP2.

The VDP2 Background Processor has its priorities set through programmable registers. It also contains 4 KB of Color RAM to

define the palettes that can be used by either VDP1 or VDP2. VDP2 plots up to five backgrounds at a time, using either characters or bit-mapped images. The latter may be either 15-Bit or 24-Bit images. Programmers may configure VDP2 to provide either four normal scroll planes, or two normal and one rotational, or two rotational scroll planes with no normal scroll planes. Additionally, there is a default back plane set to one color, or one color per line. This allows programmers to design based on a maximum of five video planes, which is also unprecedented.

Looking at this design in the aggregate, one comes to several conclusions. First, the Sega Saturn is indeed a powerful engine, but not in a revolutionary sense. Every innovation contained therein is a natural evolution of existing technology. In other words, there is no Holy Grail of gaming inside this box. Second, the architecture appears more developer friendly than the 3DO did when it first appeared. As such, expect a lot of software support, which is always a good indicator of system strength. Third, the first titles introduced in Japan are doing very well. **Virtua Fighter** is selling one for one with the machine, much as **Mario** did for the SNES and **Sonic** did for the Genesis. Because of this, much of 1996 may well belong to Sega's Saturn, but it is not far enough ahead of the rest of the pack to avoid being overshadowed by as early as 1997.

Finally, and of greatest importance to the **EG** readership, the battle for your gaming dollars is far from over. In fact, all we are seeing now are the preliminary postures of several companies vying for position to serve the "real" mass market which, guess what, is still three to five years away.

## Dollar-Yen Ratio's Effect On Prices

Prices for the new consoles to be introduced this year will be significantly affected by the declining dollars-to-yen ratio. Currently ¥83 equals about one dollar, an all-time low, and game buyers can expect to see this reflected in hardware prices.

John Taylor, **EG's** financial columnist, explained: "The best estimate I have is based on the cost of components to Sony and Sega. Sony has to pay somewhere in the neighborhood of \$300 to buy all the components that go into the PSX machine, and Sega has to pay probably in the neighborhood of about \$380. Many of those components are priced in yen. For those guys to assemble and sell the products in the U.S., the yen's strong rate against the dollar is clearly going to put more margin pressure on them than they had before.

"A lot of us are scratching our heads wondering how they are going to price at appropriate price points for their consumer markets, which is in the \$179-249 range. I think up to now we've been assuming that Sega and Sony were going to price in the neighborhood of \$299-399, and that was before we had this change in valuation of the dollar to yen. I'm going to guess that is going to put more upward pressure on what those release prices are going to be, and create more friction between the ranks of U.S. subsidiaries and the Japanese head offices.

"I'm going to guess you are going to add \$20 to \$50 in what you had expected the price to be. Whereas we might have expected Sony to launch at \$299-349 before, now we might expect \$319-399. We might have expected Sega to launch at \$349-399, now we're more likely at \$379-429."

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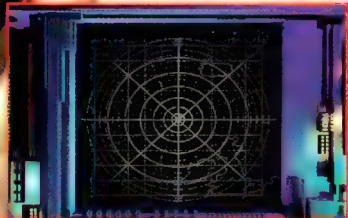


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# SATURN'S STATESIDE SOFTWARE

## The Away Team— Pushing The Frontier

by Joyce Worley

"In less than six months," said Tom Kalinske back in March, "video gaming will take on a whole different character." Sega has made dramatic moves to keep that promise.

Sega's officers know the success of the Sega Saturn depends on the quality of software. "They realized that they needed to start this big process," said Steve Payne, Sega's VP of product development, "so they put together a team just to focus on the Sega Saturn."

Sega's group of top gamesfolk was dubbed The Away Team, then given the power to cut through the corporate red tape. "Away Team as a title ties into *Star Trek*... people who explore new frontiers," explained Steve. "The other meaning is that we are working with programmers and developers all over America, in Canada and the U.K. The core team directs the efforts of dozens more."

He explained how the team started: "We started a little over a year ago, and we immediately assigned people to figure out how the Sega Saturn worked and to get the first games together." Four title producers were assigned to the core team, plus technology experts and marketing people. "Their only job is getting great Sega Saturn titles out," he said.

Steve stressed that it was a cohesive team who worked well together, not a hierarchy.

These are top gamespeople, most with experience on the Genesis, but Steve feels they have a special slant on gaming: "Many of the members of the team are a little younger than the rest of the staff... from about 22 up to early 30s. These people were closest to our market and understood intuitively what gamers want from a next-generation system."

Steve explained the process: "The first challenge is being able to conceptualize what the Sega Saturn can do... It requires

stepping up the level of art and programming and design an order of more magnitude... You have to imagine what it can do, because no one has done it before.

Max Taylor, senior producer, says working as a team is difficult. "There's not much time to sit together and talk; we're all focused on our projects."

Max also works with the out-of-house developers, and admits the distances can be troublesome. But since he started his career in the U.K., he's used to dealing with companies on the other side of the world. A drinking buddy who was a programmer inspired Max, an electronic engineering student, to design games. After graduating, the pair set up Arcana Software. After Arcana, he joined Ocean, and worked on 10-15 titles, including *Smash TV* and *Robocop 3*. He came to the U.S. about two years ago.

**FreeRunner** is one of the pilot projects that will highlight the power of the Sega Saturn. This cyberspace adventure was Max's main focus. "It's designed specifically for the over-18 players; I made a conscious effort to make a game that would appeal to someone like myself. The theme is more complicated, with all sorts of plot mechanisms that would probably be beyond the grasp of younger people."

**FreeRunner** is a detective action shooter, spread over two worlds. The cyberspace world is all rendered by the Sega Saturn in computer graphics form. The player has to search for clues to a string of murders. This portion is from a first-person point of view.

The real-world sequences are created through full-motion video clips. "We want to try to really integrate full-motion video with the game play. We're trying to shorten the video clips, and keep them from getting in people's faces... So we've set the game up in a number of stages, related to finding clues. Once you find a clue and what to do with it, you get rewarded with a video clip. There will be clues and hints in the clips, so you can't just ignore them."



"Because we've decided to go for the over-18 rating, we feel we are not restricted as to language, drugs, sex. We can make the video clip content much more interesting to watch. We're able to get a real seedy view of what it's going to be like in 50 years."

Max thinks the Away Team concept worked well: "By having a small team, everyone remains completely focused on what they're trying to achieve, and that is generating a new entertainment experience for everyone. If the team got so large that everyone had only a small role to play in it, they'd begin to lose track of what they're trying to achieve."

Team members were writing software for a machine that wasn't built yet. "Throughout the time of the development, you've got just a little bit to work with. As time goes on, you get a little more. You only actually have your final system at the end of the process. You have to have a good imagination; you have to close your eyes and see the game in front of you as it should be, while bearing in mind the technological restrictions."

Max did all the generic stuff on the PC, to port over to the Sega Saturn when it was available. The timing is a different matter, though. "You wait until you have the thing running on the console. That's why it's really impossible not to write an entire game on the PC and just port it over. You don't end up with the best possible games if you do that."

Eric Rawlins produced the American version of **Virtua Fighter**. Eric only started gaming about 3½ years ago, but his career is a player's dream: He started in the test department, then worked with various producers, until given the chance to join the Sega Saturn project. He works with the developers on everything from clerical help, budgeting and obtaining materials, to creative work like design and art direction.

He's had input on 90 percent of the projects, and says that all have special strengths; "there's something to like about all of them."

"The new equipment is a big challenge. Game design is all about working within limitations. When you don't know what those are, that's a problem." He explained that they had to continually adapt designs: "We're still learning what the Sega Saturn can do," he laughed.

"The sound capabilities are tremendous. I'm working on the helicopter game



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT  
CLOCKWISE FROM  
LEFT: STEVE PAYNE,  
ERIC RAWLINS,  
DANTE ANDERSON  
AND STEVE  
APOUR



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# THE HIVE

[Blackfire], and what I really want is not only a 3-D visual environment, but also a 3-D sound environment. We'll have a wide variety of stereo sounds, all overlapping, over and under ... a real sense of being inside the helicopter, where the ambient noise of the rotors is different from being outside."

Dante Anderson just finished the first SoJ Saturn game for the U.S., **Panzer Dragoon**, and is now working with Sega of Japan on **Clockwork Knight**. An ex-editor, before Anderson joined the Away Team he worked for Sega as a tester, then became associate producer, writing text for **Star Trek: The Next Generation** (Genesis). An interest in a couple of SoJ titles led to his eventual appointment to the Away Team.

He now works on converting Sega's Japanese titles before release in the U.S. The biggest changes are those of language. "The text has to fit in a certain number of spaces; it can't just be a translation. It has to fit and make sense as well." The problems are complicated by the distance that any proposed changes have to travel. "They send it to me on disk ... it takes days, then our lab has to take it off. It takes four to five days to get to me."

He also pointed out that the amount of memory allows a lot more latitude for the writer. "The Sega Saturn is just so much more capable that it is mind boggling. The programmers and engineers are just now figuring out what can it do."

Tim Dunley is the marketing manager for the team. Formerly with Microsoft as project manager for Cablessoft, he joined Sega just to work with the Sega Saturn project, but in August 1993, he hadn't seen the machine. "I took a leap of faith," he admitted cheerfully.

The prospect of starting on a new system was daunting. The first step was for the marketing experts to define exactly what people wanted, determine how the hardware should look, how it should be packaged, how it should be marketed and to provide insight about the kind of experience it should deliver.

"I had to work closely with the hardware development engineers, and on the software side with the Away Team," he explained. "There were a few documents and a lot of phone calls with the development team in Japan and the hardware designers, and the early members of the Away Team here."

Asked about the primary consideration at that stage, he explained: "The overall goal is to deliver an experience, and the actual capabilities of



**SEGA SPORTS:**  
FROM LEFT:  
KELLY RYAN, CRAIG  
OSTRANDER,  
GERALD "SMUV"  
DEYOUNG, CHRIS "CUT"  
CUTLIFF, AND MIKE  
MEISCHIED

sound, graphics, etc. are secondary. It's the combination of them all that makes a success. People really want the best perspective in a game world and they want the ability to change that perspective dynamically."

He also worked with the software team. "We're kinda like a two-headed dragon. On one side, we have the hardware company that wants to design the coolest and most powerful cutting-edge stuff. On the other side, we have software; we want to have the coolest games. There's a lot of overlap; the arcade group works on hardware and software, and the Sega Saturn team works on hardware and software. The software guys challenge the capability of the hardware; the hardware guys know what it can deliver."

Tim's gaming history goes back to Atari 2600. "That's something you'll find from everyone who worked on the Sega Saturn. We're the generation that grew out of the 2600. People who grew up with gaming made it an integral part of their life. To many of the people on the away team it's not just a job; people really believe that we're creating the next-generation system. We're working on something that is really going to open up gaming."

No system can go far without good sports titles. Mike Meischied formerly was with Electronic Arts where he worked on sports titles, including the original **Madden** on the Apple. But when he heard of the Sega Saturn, he wanted to be part of the team. He joined Sega in December 1993. "It's half fun and half headache," he said of working on a new system. "You run into problems no one has seen before. But—it keeps things exciting."

**NHL All-Star Hockey** will have lots of unique things, such as 3-D modeling. "We originally had a large script, and tried to take a middle road, but that was pushing things after a while. Now we're saying it's pretty much at the high end."

Something to watch for in this game is the real first-person perspective, right down on the ice. "You can get involved

in it, instead of just watching," said the producer.

Asked if gaming was always part of the best interactive experience, he replied: "Entertainment that is passive is TV. As time goes on, everyone will want even more interactivity."

Sarah Richmond, a Sega veteran, is now handling all the Sega Saturn marketing programs. Once an advertising agency art director with a degree in graphic design, she went to grad school, went to MTV, and liked working on cool projects, stuff for the 20-and-under crowd. She was involved in the creation of peripherals with Sega, then joined the Away Team to work on that set of peripherals.

Later she changed to a product manager, on **Panzer Dragoon**, **Bug!** and **Clockwork Knight**, and to interface with the software development team to make all the games more marketable. "We want to help them make it the best it can be," she explained.

In addition to the producers, Sarah also clocks the focus groups who provide feedback and input. "We've worked on everything from start to finish: what the hardware looks like, what the logo looks like."

But she, too, knows the play is first. "You can do as much marketing as you want, but if the games aren't there, it doesn't matter."

Steve Apour springboarded from being a video game tester for Atari in the early '80s, to manager of Sega's test department. Steve became part of Sega's "rapid deployment team" in late 1993, code-named the Tiger Team and eventually renamed the Away Team. He is also excited about the potential of Sega's new system: "I think consumers will get a kick out of all the games' 3-D feel. **BUG!** for example, is, as far as I know, the first 3-D platform game—not a side-scroller, but something of a quad-scroller."

The Away Team represents a very focused effort. "Everyone is really into games; they're passionate about games," said Richmond. "We all fought to get onto this team, not just because of the project, but because of our respect for each other. We knew what we were trying to do, and we knew we were the people who could do it."

Will the team continue after launch? "For all practical purposes it will continue the same way it was, to be the leader in pushing the envelope of what we can do with our highest-end platform. Some of their projects may be larger and a little more exploratory. Some may even be a little risky," said Steve Payne.



**MARKETING:**  
FROM LEFT: SARAH  
MASON-RICHMOND,  
LORI VON RUEDEV,  
TIM DUNLEY AND  
DORIA SANCHEZ




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# INSIDE CAPSTONE

Capstone Software Reaches For the Next Level of Gaming

By Russ Ceccola

**W**hen game players tried Capstone Software games in the past, they sometimes found that the game play was poor despite the movie tie-in or pop-culture license that attracted them to the product in the first place. Any company can survive in the game industry of today, when anyone can produce a game, but it takes true talent to go beyond to success.

In 1994, Capstone began a major reorganization that culminates in late 1995 with the release of three titles that exemplify the "new" Capstone. A quick glance at the company's planned releases over the next six months prove that Capstone's shift in attitude and direction has transformed the small Miami software company into a contender.

Capstone's makeover began with the release of **Corridor 7**, a successful product that capitalized on the **Doom** game style with an engine from Apogee Software. Company President and Publisher Leigh Rothschild recognized this response and vowed to stop "slapping licenses onto games." A similar but better game called **Body Count** followed **Corridor 7** and continued this initiative.

However, Capstone's growing pains were not easy. Rothschild and Vice President and COO Tag Tognalli hired on many new employees to tackle the list of software titles they wanted to produce. Unfortunately they also let go some veteran employees of the company who didn't fit into the plan they laid out. Capstone now hovers around 75 employees, with the average length of service for most of them less than a year.

Capstone is the brand name for the line of entertainment software underneath the overall corporation IntraCorp. Product managers Judy Melby and Amy Smith guide the company's future game releases. The Next Move series collects the casino simulations, board games and strategy games that have been so successful in the past as Capstone titles. Product manager Pamela Hoy explained that the purpose of the series was to "bring these games together because they all appeal to the same type of players. The AI for our computer opponents is greatly developed, but without alienating novices." Capstone recently released **Zorro** and will soon unveil multimedia and Mac versions of **Harpoon** from their subsidiary Three-Sixty (purchased in the past few months).

The reorganization of Capstone that led to such things as the purchase of Three-Sixty, the increase in staffing, the building of a film studio and the division of the company's titles into distinct product lines began in the first quarter of 1994. After four months of daily meetings, the company's principals laid out an agenda that they followed throughout the year. By the end of 1994, Capstone had

lined up an even more impressive collection of titles for 1995. This year marks the beginning of a new era in the company's existence. **TekWar**, **Witchaven** and **ChronoMasters** are all top games for different reasons. A quick look at them shows how things have changed at Capstone.

**Witchaven** is a sword-and-sorcery, first-person perspective game that will come out in time for Halloween. It is significant because Capstone bought the exclusive rights to use Apogee's newest game engine for both **Witchaven** and **TekWar**. Also, Capstone's talented artists molded each of the game's monsters in clay and filmed their movements with stop-motion techniques in the company's studio. The landscapes are gorgeous and the game play uses moving platforms, unique weapons, magic spells and an interesting approach to inventory to transport players into a time when a mighty sword was more important than conversations with one's enemies.

**TekWar** was a license and game idea that Smith brought to Capstone when she started with the company in mid-1994. *TekWar* is currently the highest-rated show on the USA Network. William Shatner himself, the series creator and source books' author, lent his full support and participation to the project. There are major plans for the promotion of the game, including weekly on-line conferences by Shatner and an appearance on David Letterman's *Late Show* in which Shatner and Dave will play the game live.



Game producer Brandon Chamberlain compares **TekWar**, also a first-person perspective game, to the popular **Syndicate**, in which players complete missions in their efforts to eradicate their enemies, but must also avoid hurting innocent people. "Unlike **Doom** and other 3-D games, there will actually be people in **TekWar** that you don't kill. The game has the look and feel of *Blade Runner*," he remarked. Players have to explore the Tek universe as they seek out and kill seven major drug lords in a multi-level, open-ended game that contains more flexibility than many first-person perspective games. The game also contains creative puzzles, a number of non-player characters to provide clues, all kinds of machinery, futuristic graphics, multiplayer modem play and video sequences directed by and starring Shatner himself. The TekLords will even have individual musical themes.

**ChronoMasters** is an original story

written by science-fiction author Roger Zelazny and his partner Jane Lindskold. Zelazny is new to computers and computer games, but many years ago a company called Telarium brought some of his stories to computers in their line of graphics-and-text adventures. Zelazny enjoyed the process of game design, but likened game plots to novels: "If it's a good game, it's got the feeling of a story. Computers are just another medium for telling stories as far as I'm concerned." The design process was "a very collaborative effort between me and Jane," according to Zelazny. He wrote the basic story and Lindskold handled the details and decision points.

DreamForge, mostly known for its RPGs published by SSI, developed the engine for **ChronoMasters** and "they kept us involved all the way down the line," remarked Zelazny. Amazingly, he still uses a typewriter to submit his manuscripts and admits that he has little experience with computers, but found the experience "such a pleasure that if I could sneak a few in over the years it would be rewarding."

Lindskold explained that she "went through the story and adjusted it where it needed to be more active so the player could control things." She was amazed that DreamForge could give the game a learning curve. Lindskold is a veteran of pen-and-paper RPGs and found it "hard to tell what players might do since I'll never talk to them," but found the overall design process "invigorating."

Smith provided as an example of Capstone's changes the way they used Apogee's engine creatively to provide "more than just another shoot-'em-up. A lot of creative people work together here at Capstone more closely than ever before in our quest to be an A-product company."

This concentration of effort even extends to the on-line community where Sean Potter, On-line Accounts Manager, spends his days developing an exciting World Wide Web site for Capstone and on-line giveaways, demos and conferences. Capstone's efforts in 1995 will not go unnoticed. The company that once put out a game centered around those ugly little troll toys has graduated to publishing, late this year, an adventure called **Crystal Skull** designed by Rob MacGregor, a writer of Indiana Jones novels and a contributing writer to the last Indy film.

From its current projects and its staff's attitude to the high levels of technology and professionalism, Capstone has become a major player in 1995 that ranks as a marked and welcome development of a company ready to face multimedia, Hollywood and the demands of its game players.

## TekWar and Peace

### The William Shatner Interview

William Shatner is the first to admit that he needs to get up to speed on computers and video games. "The progress of computers themselves and electronic technologies is so quick that you have to choose a moment in time and jump, because no matter what you do it will be out of date in six months," he commented.



Shatner is ready

to "jump" and buy a computer soon so he can actually play the **TekWar** game at home, but he still offers a lot to the design process despite his inexperience at a keyboard. "What I can add is some sense of imagination and story—both from my own point of view—and leave the game to the people who know how to make it. We want the game to reflect *TekWar* and, since *TekWar* is my creation, I can bring some personal points of view about the universe."

**TekWar** developed from Shatner's books to the TV movies and series on the USA Network, but he admitted that "out of the tickling of my imagination by electronics, from the very beginning, I envisioned a *TekWar* game. Tek provides the release of the deepest parts of your mind and, in that release, provides a means of seeing your deepest wishes fulfilled—and also your deepest fears in a 'bad trip'." The **TekWar** game will be able to explore both the desires and fears of the drug's users more easily and cheaply than can be done on film through graphics.

"Helping the people at IntraCorp create the environment, the characters, the story and the paraphernalia with which the game will be played is totally entrancing," Shatner said. "I have an innocence of the imagination when I look at these games. I'm gratified that I have the opportunity to bring this imagination to the project."

Shatner will not only participate in the development of the story, game and characters, but will also do something unprecedented in gaming. He will both direct and act (as Bascom) in the game's video segments. **TekWar** is just another example of how immersed Shatner gets in a product that he's excited about.

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Leigh

# Rothschild

HIS OWN STORY

Capstone Software made a dramatic turnaround during the past year, from a company with great licenses and mediocre game play to one with titles that have high quality all around.

Leigh Rothschild heads the company he founded with great enthusiasm, energy and vision. He recently spoke to *Electronic Games* about Capstone's makeover and his feelings about some issues affecting the gaming industry.

Rothschild is a tall, lanky man just brimming with energy. His enthusiasm for the gaming business is immediately evident when he talks about Capstone's advances over the past few months and the current lineup of products to be released over the remainder of 1995.

Rothschild started IntraCorp in Miami in 1984 with only a few employees and a dream. He previously ran a chain of video stores that he sold in 1980 to move into other businesses. Capstone is actually a brand name for IntraCorp's entertainment software that was started in 1987 with the game **Miami Vice**.

The changes in Capstone came at a perfect time in the development of the gaming industry. "Two things were happening—technology started to drive sales and the industry started to rapidly convert to a multimedia format where so much more could be done. I made a conscious decision that it would no longer be practical for my company to put out product that used medium-quality technology and great licenses when we wanted the highest level of technology, licenses or not, that we were able to achieve," Rothschild explained. "We don't want to be known as a B-grade company as far as titles. That's what the makeover was all about."

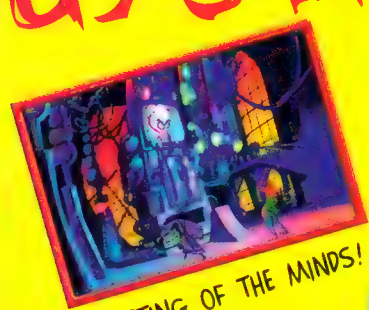
The makeover he refers to began with the release of **Corridor 7**, ironically a game that does not use any license and instead employs familiar game play in an original science-fiction setting. From that point forward, Capstone and Rothschild shifted the focus from the catchy licenses to catchier game play.

"I'm really quite excited about everything we're doing here these days," Rothschild exclaimed. Capstone hired additional employees to bring the total to a comfortable number of about 75 people. They also reorganized the strategy, gambling and board games into the Next Move series and bought Three-Sixty, the creators of **Harpoon** and **V for Victory**, outright. Rothschild commented that this purchase was "a multimillion dollar venture with only one mission—to make the best military simulation software."

Rothschild's attitude about licenses and game projects guided Capstone in a direction that can only be successful. "We just want the best. We don't have as much money as other game companies, but what we do have we use in our commitment to do

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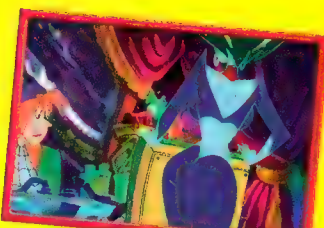
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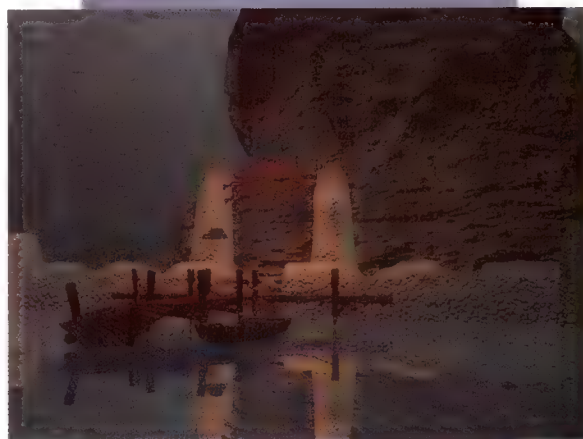
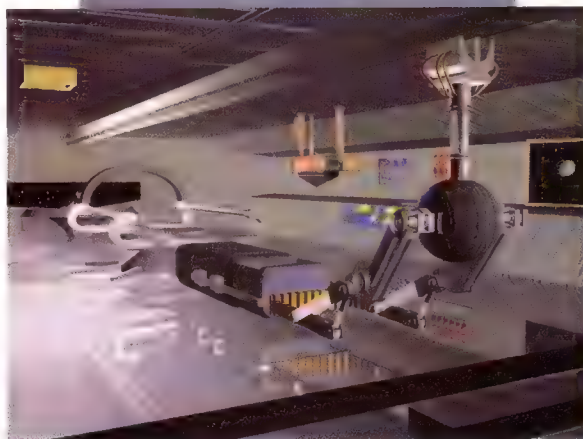
one thing—deliver value to the customer,” he remarked. His goal is to “release titles that are equal to or better than their genre competition.” With new games like **TekWar**, **Witchaven** and **ChronoMasters** on the way, it is easy to see how Capstone will be able to hold its own against other game companies.

But that has not always been the case. Some Capstone products, like **Honey D. Clown**, were absolute dogs that were the result of poor game play, a mediocre license or even bad timing. Rothschild does not deny the disappointment both he and the game fans felt for such games. He offers an explanation for the success of some of the older titles like **Home Alone**, which sold quite well. “We had great marketing and licenses which helped the B products sell. They came out at the right time, with the right quality—no more or less,” he explained.

This approach no longer works. Capstone’s change in direction takes advantage of both the bad and good experiences in the past and blazes new trails. “You have to do three things to survive now—deliver value to the customer, deliver it on time and have your own niche,” Rothschild said. Indeed, Capstone will not seek out licenses just to parlay them into a hit. According to Rothschild, Capstone “will bring out no product that does not have franchise potential.” He routinely turns down five or six licenses a month that don’t fit the new philosophy. The offers are made because of the way the “old” Capstone worked, but he would much rather commit to a project that has extended life over the years. “**TekWar** was a unique franchise opportunity, as was **Three-Sixty**. We’re aiming for longtime relationships with both developers and licensees.”

As an example, Rothschild wanted to work with the top-notch DreamForge production team for the longest time, so he made a long-term agreement with the Pennsylvania-based developers first before he put them onto the game **ChronoMasters**, co-designed by science-fiction author Roger Zelazny and writing partner Jane Lindskold.

Rothschild developed many relationships with the movie industry’s key players as he made



his licensing deals. With the gaming industry changing to focus on multimedia products, this experience puts Capstone ahead of many other companies who have to learn the ropes quickly if they intend to survive in a world where the development of games and movies gets more and more alike. “Hollywood studios trust us because we’ve been on time and they know our reputation. We understand what it takes. I realized when we started IntraCorp that it was important to cultivate those strategic contacts.”

Although Capstone has that valuable experience through licensing, it may all be moot soon because many movie companies have started their own interactive game units. Rothschild goes to Hollywood about once a month to make deals and investigate possibilities for Capstone projects. In fact, he plans to get a house in Los Angeles; he sees this as a necessity since he expects to visit the West Coast more frequently.

Given the abilities of CD-ROM technology and video techniques, Rothschild anticipates that some game companies will have to get involved in the production of films from the ground up. “The only successful interactive properties are going to be those that have thorough integration between the film unit and the interactive unit. We want to be integrally involved and may even co-produce such a movie,” he predicted. In fact, Capstone is currently exploring the possible translation of three of their properties to the silver screen.

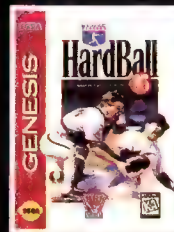
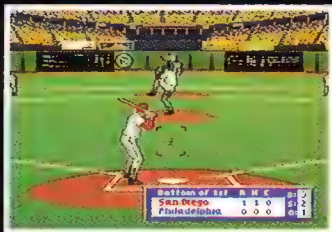
Rothschild makes no bones about how he views the people who buy Capstone games. “Our most important asset is our customer base,” he asserted. “I’m driven by putting out quality software. It’s exciting for me to take a blank disk or CD and fill it with information and creativity.”

He gets the biggest thrills out of closing a big deal, releasing a game or relaxing with a good book, although he admits that he is poor at relaxation and wishes he had more time to do the things he really enjoys. This workaholic lifestyle has obviously paid off for Rothschild, and players can look forward to high-quality games from Capstone’s concerted efforts to move in a new direction in an ever-expanding electronic gaming industry.

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# Nintendo the Innovation leader &



These high-end graphics with their millions of colors were converted to the Super NES palette using a process called debabelizing.

How to boost the performance of your

video game system without spending a dime.

At Nintendo, engineers and game designers continually work to enhance Super NES games from the inside out. Stunning new games such as Donkey Kong Country use innovative programming tech-

niques while other games actually have new hardware technology like the Super FX chip built into the Game Pak. You don't need to buy an expensive adapter to play them,

either. In fact, with games using ACM, or the FX<sup>2</sup> and SA1, gamers won't have to pay an extra dime for the innovations.

## ACM: The Magic In The Machine

So what is ACM? It's a technique in which all the graphical elements of a game are created on high-end, 3-D graphics computers like the SGI Challenge, then converted to run on the Super NES. The team at Rare spent more than 18 man-years

creating the animations and backgrounds for DKC. Then they converted the images for the Super NES in a process called *debabelizing*, which reduced the rendered images from millions of colors to 256 or less. By working from the high-

end down, Rare achieved a new level of graphics for video games. Tim Stamper, DKC's designer, sees the future like this, "From now on, everyone will have to live up to this game."



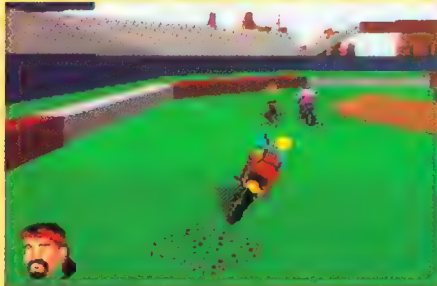
All 3-D models were created first in wire-frame for DKC. The designers animated the wire frames, to see how the motion looked. After completing a sequence of keyframes, Rare rendered the figures with textures maps and lighting.

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SiliconGraphics



The latest upgrade of the Super FX chip—the FX<sup>2</sup>—fits inside a Super NES Game Pak and is capable of manipulating more polygons, more texture mapped surfaces and more sprites. The RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computer) chip even calculates pixel-by-pixel



terrain maps on-the-fly (as in Nintendo's upcoming title, Comanche) to create more dramatic 3-D effects than were possible with the original version of the Super FX.

In Comanche and Dirt Trax FX, from Electro Brain, you'll see far more texture mapping and scaling sprites than in the original Super FX game, Star Fox. According to Jez San of Argonaut Software, the FX<sup>2</sup> can display 20,000 polygons per second, which is comparable to a high-priced 3DO system.



ACM doesn't require any adapters or special hardware for players, but it does require millions of dollars worth of equipment for game developers. The Challenge Computer at Rare is just one of the Silicon Graphics super computers that were used to create Donkey Kong Country.

## The SA1

The most recent breakthrough at Nintendo is the Super Accelerator co-processor. The SA1 fits inside Game Paks like the FX<sup>2</sup>, but the SA1 is a processor like the CPU in the Super NES Control Deck. It can access memory in the Game Pak and work directly with the CPU to provide enhanced graphics, processing speed and arithmetic functions. It runs four times faster than the Super NES CPU, improving performance by up to 500%. That translates into games with more realistic animation and 3-D environments.

## DOLLARS AND SENSE

Sega says they want to ease gamers into the next generation, but they're asking \$150 for the 32X and Saturn will cost more than twice that. In the meantime, you can spend another hefty chunk on Neptune—the all-in-one 32X/Genesis hybrid. What's that for? To ease you from the 32X to the Saturn? Maybe Sega should ease up on your wallet instead?

Gamers want better **games** today for the systems they

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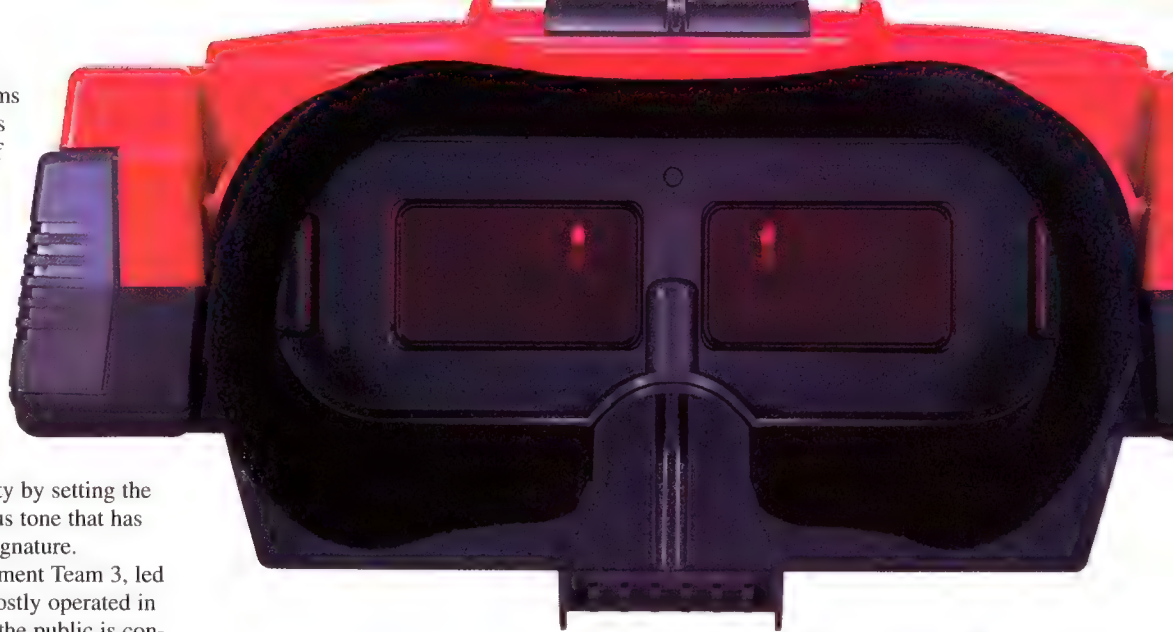
**F**

our research and development teams power Nintendo's expanding line of products. The

newest of the teams, the Entertainment Analysis and Development Team (EAD), is most closely associated with game design. Led by the man who created **Zelda** and **Donkey Kong**, the legendary Sigeru Miyamoto, this team has given Nintendo its identity by setting the family-oriented, humorous tone that has become the company's signature.

Research and Development Team 3, led by Genyo Takeda, has mostly operated in the background as far as the public is concerned. Though they developed an excellent 8-Bit game called **Star Tropics**, until recently the team's biggest contributions to Nintendo have been technical achievements such as improved use of RAM (Random Access Memory) and the battery back-up system used in game cartridges. Team 3's latest project is the development of the Ultra 64 Entertainment System, Nintendo's entry in the high-end system market.

In many ways, Research and Development Team 2 has functioned as the invention arm of Nintendo. Led by Masayuki Uemura, Team 2 developed the original Famicom system. (Famicom stands for Family Computer, the name given to the original Nintendo Entertainment System in Japan.) When Nintendo decided to manufacture a 16-Bit entertainment system, Team 2 created it.



## The Purpose Behind Virtual Boy

According to Yokoi, Virtual Boy was designed as an alternative to video games. "I saw that the market was so saturated with video games that it became nearly impossible to create anything new. There were a lot of creative ideas for games for the NES and Game Boy, but there are not so many new ideas for games for the Super NES. I think game companies ran out of new ideas. I wanted to create a new kind of game that was not a video game so that designers could come up with new ideas."

Since Yokoi had no interest in simply recreating the video game experience, he had to do more than just design a faster processor. He wanted his system to offer a totally immersive experience, something that made you feel like you had entered an entirely different world. With so many standard video game systems on the market, Yokoi felt that consumers wanted a different choice. "I think people want something new. Because this is different than other games, it can be even more successful than Game Boy."

Inventing an entirely new experience required creating new technology. "From the beginning of development we brought in university professors and doctors. We worked as a team, so I can say that this is a very complete product in theory."

Yokoi's team started by adopting one basic tenant: In order for this new system to project an immersive world, it had to incorporate true, three-dimensional graphics. "Our original concept was to create a new world with 3-D games. We needed more depth in our pictures."

The team also decided that many standard features were expendable. "Color graphics give people the impression that a game is high tech. But just because a game has a beautiful display does not mean that the game is fun to play."

Yokoi's research and development team

Despite their illustrious accomplishments, Gumpei Yokoi, the leader of Research and Development Team 1, is revered as the dean of Nintendo's engineers. Yokoi has made too many contributions to Nintendo to list. As the company's first electronics inventor, Yokoi played a major role in Nintendo's conversion from manufacturing Hanafuda playing cards to entering the age of computers. He designed toys, early arcade machines and the famous Nintendo game watch. Most of the other team leaders worked with Yokoi before starting their own development teams.

Yokoi has made software contributions as well. His team developed **Dr. Mario**. However, Research and Development Team 1's most famous inventions are the Game Boy and the Virtual Boy portable game systems.

Gumpei Yokoi exemplifies traditional Japanese values. He is fiercely loyal to

## Game Boy Creator Gumpei Yokoi Discusses His Latest Invention

Nintendo and unwilling to exaggerate his role in the company. He has only granted interviews to American reporters on two occasions, not because he dislikes the press, but because he sees himself as a background participant on the Nintendo team rather than a spokesperson.

Gumpei Yokoi granted *Electronic Games* the rare opportunity of an interview during the Consumer Electronics Show. He attended the show to see the American unveiling of Virtual Boy and discussed the new system and its creation.



# THE FUTURE IN REALITY

found that LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) screens did not provide the depth needed for full 3-D effects. When they tested prototypical LCD goggles, users often saw double images rather than 3-D displays. The team also found that they could not produce a marketable product for under \$500. Since everyone agreed that consumers would not spend that much for the product, they decided to focus on monochrome technology.

Once they narrowed their plans to single-color technology, Yokoi and his development team turned to Reflection Technology, a Massachusetts firm with a strong reputation in precision optical equipment.



"We originally approached Mr. Yokoi in 1991," says Allen Becker, president of Reflection Technology. "We had been shipping a single-eye application for industrial use, and we thought our product could be adapted to work well in the game industry."

Reflection Technology's single-eye application uses two mirrors to reflect red LED displays (Light Emitting Diode) to each eye individually. Though Yokoi's development team sacrificed color by switching to LED technology, they gained superior resolution. One of the reasons Nintendo has not released shots of Virtual Boy games is that they cannot reproduce the crisp 3-D images.

"I wish to explain why Virtual Boy uses a red LED display," says Yokoi when reminded that even Super Game Boy cartridges have more than one color. "LED comes in red, yellow, blue and green. Red uses less battery power. It is easier to recognize red images. That is why red is used for traffic lights."

Having found the right display technology, Yokoi's team began work on the goggles that would house the game. Yokoi decided that the new system would not include head tracking. One of the hallmarks of true virtual reality is that the display follows the user's visual

perspective. If the user looks right, the visual display follows the user's head motion, showing the view to the right.

"Head-tracking systems already existed when we started work on Virtual Boy," says Yokoi. "I did not like head tracking because I experienced motion sickness."

While users normally strap virtual-reality goggles to their heads, Yokoi's team decided that their game system would sit on a tabletop stand. "Having heavy goggles strapped to your head is very unnatural," says Yokoi. "Placing the goggles on a stand makes the experience better for children and adults."

It also clears Nintendo of the liability for users injured while walking in their goggles. Users may trip or get tangled in cords while wearing head-mounted goggles. With Virtual Boy's table-mounted design, the user is required to stay in one place.

The final obstacle in creating Virtual Boy was adjusting the system so that all users would have a 3-D experience. Working with Reflection Technology, Yokoi's team of optical specialists developed two sets of focus controls. One set, the Inter-Ocular Control, controlled the Hyperbole Effect or the vertical curvature of the screen. The second set of controls aligns the mirrors housed within the goggles to the space between the user's eyes.

These controls enable users to customize the Virtual Boy goggles easily. A dot appears in each corner of the Virtual Boy display. Users simply adjust the controls until all four dots are clearly visible.

"At first we made the goggles smaller so that people who wear glasses had to take them off in order to use Virtual Boy," says Yokoi. "The adjustment would have been too broad, so we decided to make the goggles bigger so that people could wear their glasses while they used Virtual Boy."

Having designed Virtual Boy's sophisticated optical hardware, the team outfitted the goggles with stereo sound. The system will have few peripherals. Nintendo has plans to release an AC adapter, communications cables and a carrying case. The company currently is also looking into releasing a rechargeable battery pack.

Yokoi says the communications cable is mostly for American markets. "Japanese players tend to play alone. American game players like to get together."

Nintendo also plans to release a shoulder mount for Virtual Boy. "Game Boy was successful because it was really handy to use. If Virtual Boy became handy, I would be pleased. The shoulder mount accessory will make it easier to use." Yokoi was unable to explain how the company will avoid liability issues with that product.

## Virtual Boy's Future as a Platform

Approximately 50 Japanese companies have signed up to develop games for Virtual Boy. Yokoi sees his new game system as best suited for action games. The first games demonstrated on Virtual Boy were a boxing simulation and a computerized pinball table.

"We are currently developing tennis and sports games for Virtual Boy," says Yokoi. "In the future, we will have role-playing games, puzzle games and simulations, too." As the creator of *Dr. Mario*, Yokoi has a passion for puzzle games but concedes that Virtual Boy's three-dimensional graphics may lend themselves to fighting games as well. "Our licensees may create fighting games for Virtual Boy. Nintendo has only a boxing game so far."

## Name that Boy

When asked how Virtual Boy got its name, Yokoi replied that the name reflected the virtual world created by the 3-D graphics. "We did not call it Virtual Boy because of virtual reality," he says, "but because it puts you in a complete world."



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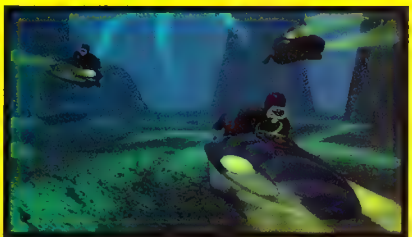
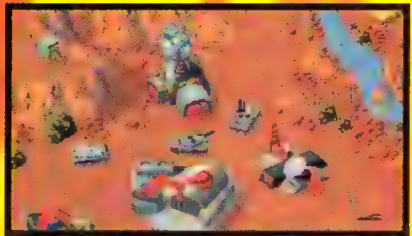
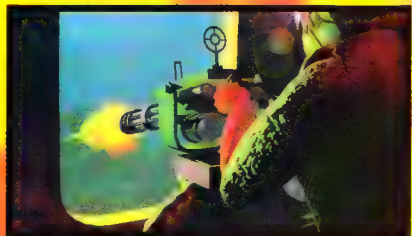
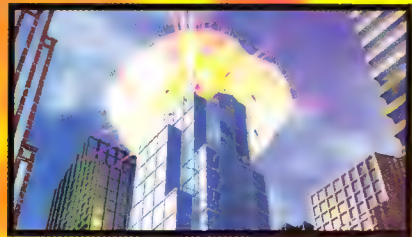
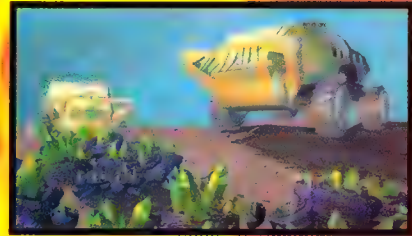
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# RJ MICAL: GAMING'S KARAMAZHOV

BY STEVE KENT

By the time Prolific Publishing recorded his laugh, RJ (Robert Joseph) Mical had worked in every phase of electronic gaming. Having invented three significant hardware systems and written both coin-operated and home console games, Mical agreed to spend an afternoon trapped in a recording studio making the laugh track for *Return Fire*, an excellent military strategy game for the 3DO.

"I sat there and laughed, and I knew that the laughter came out badly. I needed some motivation, so I remembered what I was laughing about—the player has just blown up, and a skull appears and laughs at the player. That made it easier.

"The more and more I laughed, the more I realized how goofy it was that I was sitting in a studio recording my laugh, and I started sneering and scoffing and saying things like, 'You fool! You're dead now! Ah ha ha ha!' It was really crazy.

"Finally I lost my mind and started telling jokes because I realized that there was going to be somebody at the other end of this process. Somebody down in the Los Angeles area was going to have to listen to this tape and listen to these laughs over and over again.

When you lose a vehicle in *Return Fire* on the 3DO, a skull in a German helmet appears and laughs at you. That derisive laugh belongs to RJ Mical, the anything-but-derisive inventor of the Commodore Amiga computer system, the Atari Lynx handheld game system and the 3DO interactive multiplayer.

This story illustrates one of the hallmarks of RJ Mical's success—the understanding of reciprocal relationships. While most people would concentrate only on the microphone, Mical played to the editor that would

eventually receive the tape. In the end, his tape was so "bizarre" that the executives at Prolific played it over the company's speaker system.

## Williams

In the early 1980s, Mical decided that he wanted to work in the video game industry. "It was a desire to blend together my artistic side with my math and science. For me, working at an arcade company that did cool explosions was perfect.

"I spent several weeks going to game arcades and looking at all the games, and there was no comparison. *Robotron* and *StarGate* were easily head-and-shoulders over the rest of the games, so I decided to go to Williams.

"So I went to Williams and said, 'Give me a job.'

"They said, 'Come back tomorrow.'

"I told them that I really wanted a job, so they scanned my resume and they didn't see the word 'games,' and they couldn't find computer programming for arcades, so they said, 'Go away.'

"That derisive laugh belongs to RJ Mical, the anything-but-derisive inventor of the Commodore Amiga computer system, the Atari Lynx handheld game system and the 3DO interactive multiplayer."

"But I refused to go away."

Eventually someone at Williams decided it would be less painful to hire Mical than to continue ignoring him. The decision paid off. With an incurable desire to invent and experiment, Mical quickly became an integral part of the winningest team in coin-operated hardware.

Mical experimented with color cycling at the pixel level, changing single pixels from red to yellow to black, and other animated processes that he used to create the realistic explosions in his first video game, *Sinistar*. "It started out as just a cool thing I was playing with to understand the technology, and it all wound up inside the game.

"I worked at Williams for almost two years and had done a lot of things with a lot of people. I did a lot of interesting and weird things that ended up finding their way into the games.

"In order to do things at Williams, we needed someone really clever in hardware to invent this and that and the other thing. We'd come up with an idea, and the hardware guy would say, 'Well, let's put on our thinking cap.'

"There was that give-and-take, that yin and yang of hardware and software. That's where I first learned it, at Williams."

## Amiga

"Everybody who ever created any other operating system should lock themselves in a little room and hide their face."





◆ **Return Fire**

*And you can quote me?*

—Claude Mical, president of DigiPen Applied Computer Graphics School

In 1983, Commodore Computers hired Mical to work in the newly formed Amiga division. They knew about my reputation at Williams and wanted me to join them.

"Everything I learned at college and everything I learned until going to Amiga suggested that hardware was hardware and software was software, and the way things are done is that you invent a bunch of hardware and give it to the software guys.

"There's a much better way of thinking that I learned at Amiga. For the first time, the hardware and the software were created together. There was a great flow of communication, a mutual design coming into existence at the same time so that the hardware could do what the software wanted. The software was designed to answer the needs of the hardware, and the whole thing came together in this wonderful, interlocking way."

The environment at Amiga further enhanced his belief in the yin and yang of creation. As one of the designers of the Amiga, Mical worked with Dave Needle, who eventually became his partner in designing the Lynx and the 3DO.

"We worked together at Amiga for over two years. After Amiga, I went off and worked as an independent contractor doing mostly Amiga projects. Dave took on some projects at Apple Computers."

Working with Needle, Mical began to incorporate his yin and yang philosophy into his hardware designs. While other designers created systems with single processors, Mical and Needle increased the power of their systems by including multiple processors that divided the processing load and worked in concert.

The Amiga had three processors code named Porsche, Agnes and Daphne. The multiple processor design allowed the com-

puter to streamline processing, giving the Amiga a dramatic power advantage over similarly priced units.

**Lynx**

*"Fundamentally, the Lynx was the best handheld game machine ever made."*

—Steven Baxter, CNN, *Future Watch*

Looking for a new project, Mical and Needle gravitated toward the more traditional video game market.

"Dave and I decided to do a handheld system and got together at Epyx. Dave Morris, who was the president of Amiga, was the CEO of Epyx when we did the handheld system."

Though they designed the system for Epyx, their project eventually emerged as the Atari Lynx. Mical admits that he does not understand exactly how the system ended up with Atari. "We weren't the business guys. We were just the ones who invented it."

The Lynx was created to compete with Nintendo's Game Boy. "It was our goal to produce four times the power of anything that was out there—but we really set our target at 10 times the power."

"We didn't know TurboGrafx would be one of the targets when we set out to do the Lynx. But we knew we wanted color. We knew we wanted a color, handheld game system. I was so pleased with the Lynx."

While Lynx lacked the software support to conquer the market, it was widely acknowledged as the best in the time. It outlasted the TurboGrafx system, but never caught hold of the market.

"Financially, we didn't realize anything from it, but, delightfully, it didn't matter. Needle and I were never in it for the money. We love the sheer joy of creating."

**3DO**

*"Seventeen people designed the Amiga. It took just Dave and me to design the Lynx, and we came in under budget. Turning the genesis of an idea into the reality of the 3DO took a small army. On the other hand... it was a small army."*

—RJ Mical, 3DO vice president and Fellow

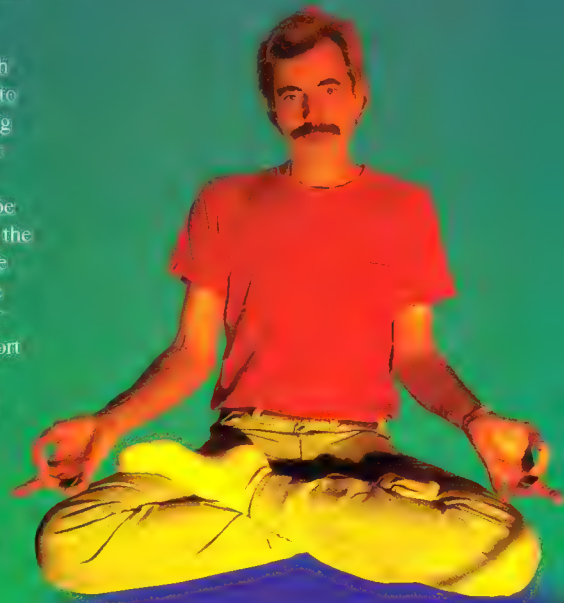
"When we walked away from the Lynx, we walked away completely. The next day we cracked our knuckles and said, 'what are we going to do next?' What came next was the 3DO, the day after we left Epyx."

"We met in a restaurant. In classic Silicon Valley style, we sketched out the basic diagram for what the system was going to be on a napkin."

In the Amiga, Mical and Needle had created an inexpensive computer with fabulous graphics. The Lynx provided good game

**"There's a much better way of thinking that I learned at Amiga. For the first time, the hardware and the software were created together. There was a great flow of communication, a mutual design coming into existence at the same time..."**

**—RJ Mical**



play for a handheld system, but it was essentially a toy. Creating the 3DO, they drew off their past experience with the goal of creating the biggest and best entertainment system that they could imagine.

Drawing on their reputation for creating cutting-edge hardware, Mical and Needle set out to attract backers. In Trip Hawkins, the charismatic founder of Electronic Arts, Mical and Needle successfully found a powerful investor with vision for standardizing the video game industry. In 1993, the new 3DO system was launched.

Of all the systems he has created, Mical derives the most pleasure from the 3DO. "3DO is really a dream come true for me. Now that I see the stuff that people are actually able to do with it.

"My siblings all have 3DO systems. Having my nieces and nephews call me and say, 'Thank you, Uncle Bobby, for inventing the 3DO...' such a good feeling."

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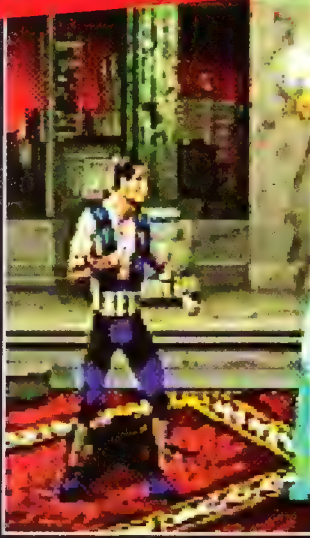
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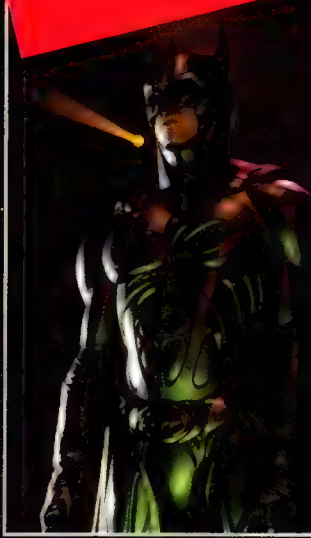
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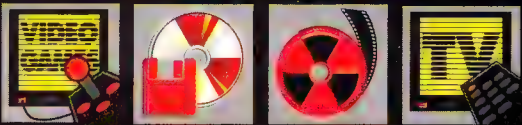
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# THE NET

## On-line's Due for a Change

The commercial on-line world has been leaping forward with all of the grace and power of a hobbled elephant in the last few years.

Admittedly, some very exciting things have happened on the Net over this time. However, the commercial services haven't come close to generating this level of excitement and excellence.

AOL's new rollout was less than impressive. Let's face it, you get a couple of pretty pictures over the same old underlying structure. Saving files still requires going through Windows, the interface doesn't want to work in the background while doing downloading, the great new post office adds nothing new to the actual mail functionality that most of us need every day.

Prodigy's last interface was much more colorful than its original, but still had significant flaws, speed probably being the main issue there.

CompuServe doesn't even seem to be trying. CompuServe knows its market share, it owns its market share and it seems to feel that anything over a straight terminal interface is for wimps and those silly home computer users.

But suddenly all of this has changed, and in a fairly short period of time.

With the explosion of the Web, everyone is clamoring to get a hipper interface and do it quickly before it is done to them. Prodigy's soon-to-be-released P2 is nothing short of incredible. AOL is said to be playing catch-up by slapping as much body putty on Version 2.0 as it will hold and buying Net pure play companies as quickly as you can say "leveraged debt."

There are even rumors that CompuServe might be trying out some new interface options in the next few months.

However, there are reasons for the low technological quality of the commercial on-line providers. They aren't keeping us in the Stone Age just because they hate their users and are secretly spending their coffee breaks laughing at how stupid we must be to jack in through substandard interface technology.



The reason is simply pipes.

Pipes are those wires going into the back of your computer. The technical term is bandwidth. The higher the bandwidth, the bigger the pipes. Conventional wisdom has it that to be commercially viable, you need to make your product flow through wimpy little 2400 baud pipes. Not much data is going to flow through those babies. There is about as much point in really trying to be slick at 2400 as dressing your dog up really nice and entering it in the Ms. America Pageant. 2400 was all the rage right around the time that 286 computers seemed like a really keen idea.

The fact of the matter is that most people have real modems jacked into their system these days. With a modern modem you can put your ear right next to it when you are running at 2400 and hear a tiny voice saying, "Help me, I'm melting."

Today's modems want to run. They can handle pipes the size of a garden hose. They aren't the size of a T1 or a ISDN line, but 14.4 and 28.8 mangle 2400 like a rabid mongoose taking out a tranquilized cobra. But for marketing reasons that baffle the technologically savvy, the major services all

cling to the idea of making sure that all of their content can go down wimpy little 2400 pipes. Not much more than text can make it through a pipe that miniscule, and even text is crawling.

However, the stakes in the on-line world are going up by the minute, and a number of new players are poised to jump into the fray. The Total Entertainment Network (which is currently in very quiet negotiations with a number of players and might or might not finally come out as a part of someone else's service) is one that has decided to ignore tiny pipes from the get-go. You play at a minimum of 9600 or you don't get on board.

Another of these new, higher bandwidth paradigm providers is the AT&T Interchange. The Interchange started its life as a tech spec from Ziff Davis, the publishing giant, with some really nifty ideas about what you could do with the current on-line technology. In the whole bargain, they introduced the idea of jacking in a new type of business model.

But somewhere along the way, things got strange for them, and the ZD Interchange went on the market. That's right, Ziff Davis decided to sell their on-line service—before

it existed. All it was at that point in the process was a group of technologies and a great business plan.

Enter AT&T. AT&T decided sometime in the last 24 months that Bill Gates wasn't going to be the only person to own cyberspace. By gum, AT&T *invented* half of this network technology stuff, didn't it? So it went rabid. First AT&T took over Imagination Network. Now this might seem to be a little strange, since Imagination hasn't been an exactly stunning success. When the big services can claim millions of members, Imagination would be experiencing a giant growth explosion if their membership hit 100,000.

But then AT&T, in what must have appeared to some as a result of too much LSD in the water cooler, decided to buy the Ziff Davis Interchange. The cost is officially undisclosed, but the rumor mill says that between 50 to 100 megabucks went into ZD's corporate pockets. This for a service that had never seen a paying user.

However, the late beta of the Interchange is on the street, and you get the feeling that AT&T's smile is starting to look less the result of drugs and more like the result of swallowing a canary.

The Interchange isn't the biggest leap forward ever seen in on-line technology, but it is an excellent implementation of the cutting edge currently available for garden hose-sized pipes. You can tell from the get-go that the research team at Ziff Davis, and later AT&T, spent a lot of time staring out a window and asking themselves what would be really cool in an on-line service.

Following this unique approach, they started, appropriately enough, with something almost, but not quite, exactly like a web browser.

The feel of the Web starts the minute the Interchange software is installed. The first thing the new user sees is a TCP/IP stack manager kicking in and setting up a SLIP/PPP connection, a dead giveaway that what is to come might have more than a passing resemblance to the Web. That isn't a bad thing. Because the web paradigm has something all of the commercial online services seem to have forgotten about, and Interchange uses to maximum advantage: hypertext links.

When you are dealing with the Interchange, almost every page you will see is somehow cross-linked to related data. For instance, browsing through the news becomes an interactive experience due to hypertext links in the news documents to related stories and information. One document about PBS had links to five other stories on the same topic buried in the text. Simply clicking on the link point takes the user directly to the related material.

One of the places where Interchange's linking really shines is in discussions. When looking at news articles the article takes up the majority of the screen, but a thin column



on the left shows the topics of user postings that are linked directly to that article. This way a specialized discussion group can start spontaneously, linked directly to a piece of news or other data. There is no need for the discussion participants to post relevant material directly in the thread because the thread is linked directly to source documentation. This might seem minor to someone who hasn't spent a lot of time in discussion postings on-line, but for those who have a good deal of experience, the immense benefits of working this way are readily apparent. It keeps everyone involved on the same page, as it were.

Once a discussion thread is started, it takes on a life of its own. The Interchange software will ask you if you wish to maintain your presence in a thread and update it whenever you come on-line, regardless of whether you go back to the original page. As new documents become linked into the thread, you can jump straight to those also. This takes on-line posting into a new and welcome dimension.

A closely related topic to posting is mail. Interchange's mail system is one of the most advanced available. You can link sound, video, images and plain text to create your on-system mail. The Interchange software will take care of decoding and playing the message. This ends the need for cumbersome downloading and decompression of files that are really just a part of your message anyway.

There is also a form function built into the mail. This allows users providing services to send out letters that have reply blanks or check boxes set into the text. These forms will give content providers the ability to automate and control a number of feedback and user-polling functions.

Of course, full video, sound and image support are built into the rest of the service also. According to Interchange spokesperson Jennifer Christensen, CD-ROM support is planned that will help ease up the flow of these bandwidth-gobbling activities. The idea is that Interchange will send out a companion CD-ROM to users from time to time that will contain large parts of the video and sound content of the service. When the user does something that calls these chunks of data, they will stream into the content seamlessly from the CD-ROM instead of dooming the user to a long wait for the content to download from the Interchange systems.

Another nice, though seemingly minor, touch to the Interchange system is the file handling capability. One of the more annoying aspects of some services for those who are surfing a lot of data is the need to use the Windows file management system to move around content taken from the service. This is cumbersome and time consuming. Interchange beats this by giving users a drag-and-drop graphical filing system that is very utilitarian and intuitive. Again, a seemingly minor point that serious power users will appreciate from the moment they see it.

Rounding out the little, high-quality touches of the service are background downloading, the ability to use other Windows programs while the Interchange does its own updates in the background, automatic file decompression and a host of other tempting little goodies.

Overall, the Interchange service has a feel something akin to an expensive, quality pocket knife. There might be cheaper models that have more gleaming metal and apparent features, but when you use the real thing you can feel the attention to detail and workmanship that went into the product.

The Interchange is the essence of what on-line computing services were meant to be three years ago.

But no matter how good the interface, the telling point of any on-line venture is the content, and Interchange is showing just as much vision here as it is with its interface.

The Interchange, quite simply put, isn't going to offer any content at all. This might seem rather odd, but you need to remember that the Interchange is the very same service that was purchased for roughly the gross national product of Guatemala before it had a single user.

Instead of being a content provider, the Interchange is going to be a vehicle for others to publish their own branded on-line content. The users will never sign onto the Interchange. There will be no mass mailings of disks for the "Interchange Service".

Instead, users will be signing on to, for instance, "The Washington Post Online Service." The users, from the moment they sign on, will be in an area that appears to be fully and completely a product of the Washington Post. But Interchange will be the vehicle and background for this provider. The Washington Post will even set its own charges. To the users, the Interchange itself will be totally transparent, simply the technology delivering the Washington Post Service.

There will be an area that will allow users to sign up for other services linked through the Interchange provider; however, those users will still be coming to that content from the Washington Post, and the Post will receive a cut of the fees for their customer's activities with other publishers, just like a real on-line service currently does.

At the moment, there are only a few confirmed content providers, such as Ziff Davis and the Washington Post (though the name of their branded content isn't confirmed and the above reference was just an illustrative example), and none of these providers are game specific.

However, the Interchange is offering to content publishers some of the best rates in the industry, backed by some of the best-built technology, so it is a sure bet that game companies, among others, are sure to jump on board. Lack of content isn't very likely to be a problem with the Interchange.

Scheduled for release sometime later in this year, the Interchange is likely to be one of the most important of the new generation of on-line offerings.

No matter what the branded name a user is coming in under, this technology will make on-line mavens of all stripes see how it should have been done in the first place.

# The Net News

## IBM Gets Closer To God

Some may recall that a few months ago there was much noise in the bandwidth about the bogus news report that had Microsoft and the Vatican in a proposed business merger. Well, the other shoe dropped when the Vatican actually signed with Microsoft's often rival IBM.

Confirmed reports have the computing giant entering into an agreement to digitally provide part or all of the Vatican library as digital content. According to IBM sources, some of the content is expected to end up on the Internet.

This push by IBM is part of its Digital Library initiative, which hopes to provide

## Netscape Selling Space

According to *Inside Media*, the newest version of the Netscape Navigator browser will be including a bit more content than some users might expect—in the form of ads. Netscape's 1.1 release will include ads on the homepage. Among the advertisers are AT&T, EDS and Adobe Systems.

For those who don't know it, you can't get away from seeing the homepage when the browser is first opened.

While this might seem more than a little annoying to some, it is actually part of an accelerating process that most industry insiders see as a good move for the Net: Advertising supporting content and services as opposed to fees for connections. More and more Net services are being supported by advertising dollars, including the hottest stop on the Web today, Hotwired.

In addition, Netscape is going to be putting ad space in their own Net area.



## And Speaking Of Advertising In The Interface . . .

Prodigy immediately comes to mind. This pay-as-you-play service has been adding advertising content to its interface for years. However, Prodigy might finally be getting some bucks for its bang. According to press releases just before this issue went to print, Prodigy expected to finally post a quarterly profit—for the very first time in nine years of operation.

Being the first of the big three commercial services to add a World Wide Web browser has really paid off for Prodigy, with over 600,000 user hours logged in March to Web surfing. The belated addition of chat facilities, however, has proved to be the real gold mine. Prodigy is very close to a million-hour chat month, according to spokespersons, and that adds up to over 2 Meg in cool cash in Prodigy's pocket for connect fees.

Prodigy, as any astute reader will be aware, only has good prospects for the immediate future, with the release of its P2 browser expected at about the same time this issue hits the stands. P2 will upgrade the Prodigy service tremendously as well as making Prodigy content seamless with the World Wide Web.

Prodigy, the number three on-line service, is not only trying harder, it is busting chops to get there.

large-scale information holders with the means to digitally distribute their content.

## ESPNET Up And Running


ESPN's Internet offering, in the works for quite some time, is finally up and running. The service, called ESPNET SportZone (will companies ever stop trying to look hip by jamming two words together and leaving a cap in the middle?) will be providing sports information generated by ESPN to the Internet community.

According to press releases, the service will also be providing content for the Microsoft Network. The new Microsoft on-line service is due to launch sometime before the end of the decade or whenever Windows '95 ships, whichever comes first.

The ESPN service will also be providing content from the Associated Press, *SportsTicker* and *Pro Football Weekly*.

SportZone can be found at: <http://ESPNET.SportZone.com>

by John P. Withers



After hearing his  
favorite games on  
a Sound Blaster,  
Vincent regretted  
the ear thing.



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# TEST LAB

## Crave the Rave, Catch the Wave

As the demands of high-end multimedia continue to grow exponentially, players are constantly on the horns of the technical dilemma. In order to avoid being out of date the day after an upgrade, players must look for the periodic plateaus in technology when things tend to stabilize. Previously, Test Lab examined the Matrox line of video solutions. Herein, we will examine the MPEG solution, as offered by Sigma Designs.

MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group) is a way of compressing digital audio and video to a fraction of its original, uncompressed size. File reduction ratios under this standard can run as high as 200:1 while allowing full-screen playback at rates as high as 30 fps (frames per second). By comparison, standard multimedia video can be as slow as 8 fps.

MPEG cards are essential components of 3DO's long-range plans, as well as many other console developers. It appears to be a standard whose time has come. Sigma Designs, based in Fremont, CA, has developed a line of MPEG products for the PC market that provide high-quality audio/video reproduction at a price comparable to many high-end video cards. One of the best values in their new line is the RealMagic Rave.

Sigma Designs' RealMagic Rave is a VESA Local Bus graphics accelerator with built-in MPEG capabilities. Rave delivers up to 74 minutes of full-screen, full-motion video with CD-quality MPEG audio from one CD-ROM. The hardware requirements are a 486SX/25 or faster personal computer with one free Version 2 compliant VESA Local Bus slot and 4 MB RAM. The Rave is capable of displaying 128,000 effective colors at resolutions up to 1280 x 1024 without degradation below the rated 30 fps. When this is combined with refresh rates up to 75Hz, one approaches the current quality of television signals. The Rave comes in either a 1 MB or 2 MB configuration. Both incorporate 16-Bit stereo sound with CD quality to back up the video output.

Test Lab is constantly bombarded by



claims of "cutting edge" this and "high performance" that, which, as a rule, makes one skeptical. Nevertheless, the staff had heard so much positive word of mouth on the Rave that, before the delivery guy could get back in his truck, we had the case off our test station and were installing the hardware. This consisted of plugging the card into a VESA slot, attaching the monitor and running a jumper cable from the audio out to the line on the existing sound card. The test station was a Comtrade 486DX2/66 with 8 Meg of RAM, a 15" monitor, a 2X CD-ROM, an Orchid SoundWave 32+SCSI and a Yamaha YST-SS1010 speaker system.

The software came on three High Density disks, two for Windows and one for DOS and utilities. Installation was simple but did require changing the IRQ setting from the default installation. This is a factor of individual system configuration but, because of the following, it must be noted herein. The

installation utility claimed to indicate which IRQs and DMAs were free, but it chose an IRQ that was already in use nonetheless. Though we routinely deal with IRQ conflicts and the problem didn't prove insurmountable, users not comfortable with these issues must understand that the installation routine is not "plug and play."

The software includes a Mixer, Demo CD Player, CD Station, Media Player and a Screen Saver. Controls for Setup, Border adjustment and VAFC (VESA Advanced Feature Connector) are featured as well. After having a look at the Demo CD, the first definitive test of the RealMagic Rave was an MPEG version of INXS' Greatest Video Hits. The CD Station was easy to use and was laid out to resemble the controls on a VCR. When users enter the program, it scans the CD and determines whether it is MPEG or standard audio. In the MPEG Mode, a "TV" screen is displayed on the monitor, complete with controls at the bottom of the screen. In Audio Mode, the control panel is displayed at the top of the screen, similar to the CD players found with most audio cards.

During playback, Test Lab is happy to report that the video and soundtracks meshed perfectly, without the noticeable lag

**RealMagic Rave**  
VESA Local Bus graphics  
accelerator  
MSRP: \$489 with 1 MB,  
\$569 with 2 MB

between lip movement and vocal track found in many other systems. Click the mouse again to hide the control panel, providing full-screen video that rivals the performance of a home television. Both audio and video were sharp and free of flicker and stutter during the entire CD. To give one an idea of how tight MPEG compression is, 24 complete videos and several interviews fit onto two CDs.

Despite this already impressive performance, the RealMagic Rave really comes

into its own running MPEG games and applications. There are already many titles available, ranging from rock videos and movies to games and educational titles. RealMagic Rave is also capable of playing all Philips CD-i Digital Video titles.

When PC CD-ROMs first came out, the general consensus was "finally, media that can store an entire program on one unit." That perception died quickly in the face of titles like **Under a Killing Moon**, which is a fantastic game that took up four CD-ROMs nonetheless. MPEG compression is one solution, albeit a temporary one by other indicators, of moving back to the single disk game without sacrificing quality or content. The MPEG version of Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia (a single-disk product) was one of the best demonstrations of the power of the RealMagic Rave. When a video clip was selected, instead of the all-too-familiar small square in the middle of the screen, users enjoy a full-size window with a clear, sharp picture and happily, no lack of detail.

The benefits of the RealMagic Rave are

not limited to MPEG playback. It is also a high-performance graphics and Windows accelerator card with "Deep Green PC" power management. You can select resolutions including 640x480, 800x600 and 1024x768 and screen controls allowing a virtual desktop of any range from 1280x1024 to 1600x1200. This feature will display a section of the desktop at resolutions up to 1024x768 and allow you to "pan" across the desktop to access the areas you need. As with other cards, performance is not limited to Windows. A TSR driver allows you to take advantage of MPEG compression in DOS-based applications and games. There are also specific drivers for programs such as Word Perfect 5.1 and 6.0, Microsoft Windows NT 3.1 and 3.5 and AutoCad 10, 11 and 12, to name just a few.

The RealMagic Rave carries a suggested retail price of \$489 for the 1 MB configuration and \$569 for the 2 MB version. Sigma Designs offers other cards and packages as well. The RealMagic card offers MPEG audio/video, built-in Level 2 sound enhancements, such as line/microphone input, a joy-

## Available MPEG Software Titles

### Games

**Return to Zork**, Infocom  
**The Horde**, Crystal Dynamics  
**Dragon's Lair**, ReadySoft  
**Man Enough**, Tsunami Media  
**Video Cube: Space**, Softkey International  
**Lord of the Rings**, Interplay Productions  
**Conspiracy**, Virgin Games  
**Space Ace**, ReadySoft  
**Psychotron**, The Multimedia Store  
**Flash Traffic: City of Angels**, Tsunami  
**Mighty Morphin Power Rangers**, Xophias

### Education

**Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia**, Compton's New Media, Inc.  
**20th Century Video Almanac**, MindScape  
**World Atlas**, MindScape  
**World View**, SoftKey International, Inc.  
**Animal Kingdom**, SoftKey International  
**New York, NY**, SoftKey International, Inc.  
**Americana**, SoftKey International, Inc.  
**Mozart Visits Yosemite**, EE Multimedia  
**Mozart Visits Yellowstone**, EE Multimedia  
**Learning Fly Fishing**, EE Multimedia  
**The Nature of Hunting**, EE Multimedia  
**Digital Bar**, Bindernagel-Ross

### Utilities

**Matinee**, Video Toys  
**MPC Wizard**, SoftKey International, Inc.

### Music Videos/Entertainment

(the symbol that Prince uses for a name) **Interactive**, Graphix Zone  
**INXS' Greatest Video Hits 1980-1990**, Warner Special Products  
**The Juliet Letters**, Elvis Costello and the Broadsky Quartet, Warner Special Products  
**Just Lookin' For A Hit**, Dwight Yoakam, Warner Special Products

Plus 21 other titles, with dozens more due to be released soon. Sigma Designs is also putting together its own Software Development Team, which has 13 more titles due to be released by press time. The RealMagic Rave also supports the Philips CD-i and Video CD titles.

## RealMagic Rave Specifications

<b>MPEG Video Standard</b>	Full Compliance with MPEG standard (ISO 11172)
<b>MPEG Playback Colors</b>	128,000 effective colors in any mode
<b>MPEG Playback Resolution</b>	Up to 1280 x 1024/60Hz or 1024 x 768/75Hz, resizable from 16 x 16 to 1280 x 1024
<b>Frames per Second</b>	24 fps (film), 25 fps (PAL), 30 fps (NTSC) sustained frame rate
<b>Overlay</b>	VGA Colorkey: Replaces any VGA color with full-motion video Full-Motion Colorkey: Replaces any color from full-motion video with VGA/SVGA Graphics
<b>MPEG Sound Standard</b>	16 bit/sample, 32kHz/44.1kHz/48kHz sample rate
<b>CD-ROM formats supported</b>	ISO 9660, CD Audio (Red Book), Karaoke (Bridge format)*, CD-i (Green book)*, Video CD (White Book)*
<b>GUI Acceleration</b>	Trident TGUI9440AGi
<b>Graphic Acceleration Features Chip</b>	Hardware optimized BitBLT, line drawing, short stroke vector, rectangle fills and text transfer; internal hardware cursor; color expansion modes and 256 ROPs for 8/15/16-Bit per Pixel Modes
<b>Video Memory</b>	Available 1 MB or 2 MB configuration
<b>Resolutions Supported</b>	640 x 480 - 256 colors/72Hz, 16M colors/60Hz 800 x 600 - 256 colors/72Hz, 16M colors (2MB)/56Hz 1024 x 768 - 256 colors/75Hz, 64k colors (2MB)/87Hz interlaced 1280 x 1024 - 256 colors (2MB)/60Hz
<b>Feature Connector</b>	VESA Advance Feature Connector (VAFC) compliant

\*CD-ROM drive must be XA, more 2, form 2 capable

stick port and MIDI I/O support. It also has built-in support for Sony and Panasonic CD-ROM drives as well as the new IDE CD-ROM drives. This combination allows what used to be three cards to occupy only one slot at a price of only \$449.

For those power users who wish to create their own multimedia, for entertainment or business use, the RealMagic Producer is an easy, affordable way to create professional full-screen, full-motion multimedia presentations and titles. At a suggested retail price of \$3,995 it is a little above what the average individual will be putting in their personal machines, but it is well within the means of even small businesses who are interested in producing their own multimedia presentations. For those who desire large-screen viewing for businesses presentations to large groups, Sigma Designs has developed the RealMagic TVTime. This additional peripheral (\$179 suggested retail) can output VGA graphics to a TV screen in addition to a computer monitor.

While these cards provide excellent performance with both MPEG audio/video and standard video modes, the real question is whether the MPEG standard they are based on will be widely supported. Many companies, such as Sony, Atari and Philips, are producing MPEG software, and some motion-picture companies are looking into MPEG to store movies on CD. Perhaps there will even be a day in the not-too-distant future when we can all take our videotapes to the camera kiosk in the mall and have them transferred to CD in MPEG format, much as we can do now with still photographs. CDs are certainly a much more durable medium and, if the music industry can be seen as a precursor of this trend, one sees immediately the interest Hollywood is expressing.

Nevertheless, not all good ideas are met with open arms. Sigma Designs has put together a nice package. You can "Crave the Rave." But, whether that also means you will "Catch the Wave" of the future or not remains to be seen.

## InterAct Aerospace Speakers

With sound becoming an integral part of the computing experience, speakers are high on the shopping list of most PC owners. The problem with PC sound is that for the price of a high-end shielded speaker outfit you could get a set of Bose or Klipsch for your stereo. Cost-conscious shoppers should take a look at STD's new Aerospace speakers. These speakers provide 15 watts of power per channel from internal bridged amplifiers at frequencies from 100Hz to 18,000Hz, pumped through a 3" full range driver. The speakers also incorporate ABEC (Advanced Bass Enhancer Circuit), which delivers maximum bass output without degrading sound quality. The cases are low-profile and attractive with brackets that allow them to



be mounted on a monitor or computer case. One particularly nice feature of the Aerospace is the wired remote control. The remote controls power on/off, bass on/off and volume. It can be mounted with the included bracket to a keyboard or computer case, which means adjustments are easy as well as close at hand.

The STD Aerospace speakers can be used with PCs, MACs and home video game systems, as well as portable CD and cassette players. Sound quality is good as long as the volume isn't maxed out, where it began to break up. The bass response was quite good considering it was coming out of a single 3" cone. They are powered by a nine-volt AC/DC adapter and can also be powered by six AA batteries if users don't have an available outlet or just want to take their Discman to the beach. These speakers may not rattle the windows, but with a suggested retail price of \$49.95, they will not rattle a wallet either.

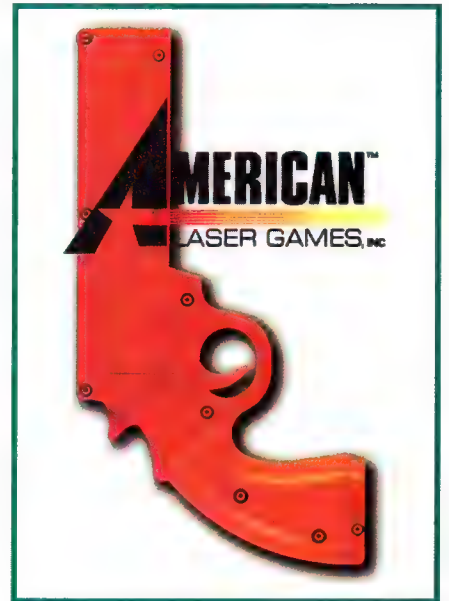
## American Laser Games PC GameGun

American Laser Games (ALG) is about to add a new level of interactivity to many of its games in the form of the PC GameGun. This product will be familiar to many 3DO and Sega CD users, to whom the product has been available for some time.

The PC GameGun is a plastic, lightweight peripheral designed to replace the mouse for ALG's PC CD-ROM shooting games. The gun gives the player far more flexibility than is afforded by a mouse. It puts you into the action and eliminates losing track of your mouse pointer during scene changes. Pointing the GameGun at a target is much faster than rolling the mouse and can, at times, afford the player an extra shot, which is frequently the difference between victory and joining the turf club.

The PC GameGun is constructed of high-impact, orange plastic and, though much lighter, is about the same size as a Colt "Peace Maker." It connects to the PC

through both the parallel port and the game port, which provides the power. The GameGun comes with a 3.5" disk containing drivers for all of ALG's Live Motion Picture Action games. Supported titles include **Mad Dog McCree**, **Who Shot Johnny Rock?**, **Mad Dog II: The Lost Gold**, **Space Pirates**, **Crime Patrol** and **Drug Wars**. Interest in the PC GameGun has prompted ALG to step up production,



and release is now set for April with a suggested retail price between \$54.95 and \$64.95. Later this year ALG will be releasing **The Last Bounty Hunter**, their first title with the PC driver programmed into the game. ALG is also working with major game manufacturers to program games for PC GameGun compatibility.

ALG will also be releasing a two-player GameGun for 3DO in July '95 as well as a GameGun for the Sony PlayStation in November '95.

.....  
by Ed Dille

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# FLIGHT LEADER

## Baselining Sims: Three Questions



FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0

There are three questions people ask when they are exposed to entertainment flight simulations: 1) Can these games help you learn to fly? 2) How realistic are these games? 3) After hours of play, have you really learned anything about flying in "the real world"? Generally, these are intended as "quick questions" with the interrogator desiring a "quick answer" that will explain the nature, scope, content and realism of flight sims. Although rarely as quick as the interrogator hoped, the answers to these questions do define the scope and capabilities of entertainment simulations.

### Can You Use These Games to Learn to Fly?

This is usually the first question a person poses when he or she first encounters a flight sim. Usually, they are trying to categorize flight sims in general: Are they "just games" or are they more than that? If they have little background in either flying or flight simulation, they probably expect a simple, straightforward "yes" or "no" answer to what they believe is a simple, straightforward question. The correct answer, though, is "partially."

Unfortunately, most new users I've met tend to translate any non-yes answer into "no." Flying consists of many different skills. From basic Visual Flight Rules (VFR) to more advanced Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), from propellers to jets, from single engine to several variations of multi-engined thrust, flying consists of many different "levels," each of which requires a specific set of skills. Of the flight sims on the market today, I'm not aware of any individual one that covers all of these aspects. **Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0 (FS5)** and **Sub Logic's Flight Assignment: ATP (ATP)** cover most of the basics of navigation and flight.

**FS5** and **ATP** include realistic navigation, instrumentation, flight controls and procedures; spend a few hours practicing proper approach and communications procedures and the next time you fly a commercial airline, you'll find you can understand the

cockpit audio (if the Captain makes it available through your headset). Both **FS5** and **ATP** model normal flight responses reasonably well such as: when stalling an aircraft is desirable and when it can be fatal; the aerodynamic principals of thrust, weight, lift and drag; the details of taxiing, taking off and landing and how to navigate by instruments. Emergency procedures are not as well covered. **FS5** spins, for example, are fairly simplified. **FS5** does a fair job of teaching you when an aircraft is likely to spin, what you can do to get into a spin, but doesn't differentiate spin types.

**FS5** will not teach you to fly overnight, but it can teach various aspects of flight. Equally as important, **FS5** can be used to practice techniques and procedures learned during normal flight training. Further, not all sims model all aspects of flying equally, preferring to focus on game play and action over flight authenticity. Microsoft's **FS5** is an excellent tool for aspiring pilots; Origin's **Strike Commander** is not. Why? Read on.

### The Intermediate User: How Realistic Is It?

The label "flight sim" is attached to a wide variety of products, some of which strive for flight authenticity and realism while others strive for action and adventure.

Neither category is superior to the other, but (as game publishers are learning) each has its own specific market. Not everyone wants to learn to fly through a flight simulator, some want lots of shoot-'em-up action. Initially, most flight sim users probably start with the shoot-'em-up games, but after acquiring some experience many gravitate toward the more realistic types. Eventually, when a new sim is released somebody asks, "How realistic is it?" When asked on the on-line networks, such as CompuServe or Internet, a vicious argument called a "flame war" almost always erupts.

This question, like the prior one, has a loaded answer. Is **Falcon 3.0** realistic? The answer is "yes and no." Is **FS5** Realistic? Again, the answer is "yes and no." In this context, "realistic" encompasses a myriad of topics. Does it model thrust and drag properly? Does it model angle of attack effects properly? Does the simulated aircraft respond properly to stick inputs? Do control inputs realistically induce other, unwanted aircraft responses? Does it correctly follow the progression from controlled flight, through stalling, into uncontrolled flight? Are weapons appropriately modeled? What about inertia? Momentum? The list goes on and on.

In general, the "civilian" sims (like **FS5**) tend to do a better job with overall flight models, in my opinion. That's probably because it's the main emphasis of the program. Combat sims must also consider the weapons, the avionics and the enemy actions as well as the flight models. At the time of this writing, there are no combat flight sims on the market that have 100 percent accurate flight models. **F-15 Strike Eagle III** from MicroProse excels with its thrust/drag model, but lacks some of the finer handling qualities. **Falcon 3.0**, meanwhile, has excellent handling qualities but has a fairly poor thrust/drag model that fails to consider the weight of onboard weapons and fuel. **F-15SE** is realistic in some areas, **F3** in others. To date, no combat flight simulation has excelled in all areas. To judge their relative flight model realism, we have to examine each individual detail of each flight model.

**Falcon 3.0**, for example, does a good job with the overall sensation of flight. The simulated F-16 has too much thrust under certain conditions, sinks too fast on landing and phases out rudder input as a function of airspeed rather than angle of attack; however, it generally behaves as an aircraft should. It can sustain too many Gs in a turn at 10,000 feet, but the relationship between creating lift and bleeding speed works properly. The values displayed on the screen may not be entirely accurate, but numbers accurately change in relation to each other.

**Tornado** from Digital Integration and **Fleet Defender** from MicroProse are other examples of reasonably realistic flight sims. These programs have their share of flaws and inaccuracies, but they do present a fairly accurate presentation of the aircraft they simulate. **Fleet Defender** won't qualify you to go to sea with the *USS Nimitz's* next cruise, but you will walk away with a decent understanding of what F-14 pilots must contend with.

Kesmai's **Air Warrior** is another fine example. There's two things that set **Air Warrior** fans apart from other flight sim enthusiasts: 1) **Air Warrior** fans cannot talk about **Air Warrior** without endless complaints about everything that's wrong with it. 2) They can't play it enough. It's definitely a love-hate thing. **Air Warrior** does so many things right that it attracts the "hard-core" flight sim fans like a magnet.



Unfortunately for **Air Warrior**, those same fans tend to be the most critical judges. In fact, it seems the more someone complains about **Air Warrior** the more they love to play it. Complaints range from "This variant of the Fw 190 should have had 26 more bullets" to "it's too easy to recover from spins." What attracts **Air Warrior** players? I see two reasons. First, **Air Warrior** is almost exclusively played on-line against other live, human opponents a la **Battletech**. You didn't just shoot down some programmed assortment of bits on your hard drive, you won against another living, thinking person. Second, **Air Warrior** is the only sim available right now that accurately models the progression from controlled flight to uncontrolled flight, thereby forcing players to fly and fight realistically. What exactly does that mean? Keep reading.

#### The Expert User: Did I Really Learn Anything?

After considerable sim experience, players usually begin wondering if they've really learned anything. If they're good at downing MiGs in **Falcon 3.0**, could they have been good combat pilots in the real world? As with the previous two questions, this question also has a qualified answer: It depends on how realistic the simulation in question models combat. Dogfighting is an exercise in aircraft control.

Think about a checking account. You can write checks and buy just about anything you want ... as long as you have money in the bank. When you overdraw the account, you invariably face a penalty. Air combat is similar. You push your aircraft to provide as much performance as possible and outmaneuver the bad guy. If you push your plane too far, in essence "overdraw" how much performance it can give, nature demands a penalty. Depending on how far

you pushed the aircraft, the penalty could merely be a brief stall (during which you have no control over your aircraft, but it remains fairly stable) to a serious departure such as a spin (during which the aircraft is not only out of your control, but also falling out of the sky). The aircraft achieves maximum performance at the "edge" of its "envelope," but push it any further and it stops performing altogether.

**Air Warrior**, despite its many flaws, has probably the best overall model of this process currently available. Most flight sims allow the player to simply pull the stick as far back as it'll go and hold it there. In the real world (and in **Air Warrior**) this tactic will lead to a departure every time.

The pilot must instead continually move the stick forward and backward as airspeed changes to keep the aircraft at its maximum performance.

The ultimate proof, though, lies in the performance of simulator-only pilots when they actually climb into a cockpit. Thanks to places like **Sky Warriors**, **Air Combat USA**, **Aces Aim** and others, the "average Joe" can try his hand at dogfighting in laser-equipped aircraft under the watchful eye of military instructor pilots. Without fail, the instructor pilots generally dismiss the flight sims as mere games ... until they've flown a few hops with the sim jocks.

The sims can't teach everything and none of them are 100 percent "realistic" but the more realistic ones are fully capable of teaching many aspects of flying, including the basics of aerial combat maneuvering. In the end, despite the stereotypical view of flight sims as "toys," hardcore flight sim fans that dedicate sufficient time in pursuit of their hobby will answer the three quick questions as, "Yes, yes and yes."

by Tom "KC" Basham

# MIND GAMES

## Finding Your Roots

**S**ociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle.  
—Peter A. Kropotkin

Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire, and to know what he ought to do.  
—St. Thomas Aquinas

Gaming is essential to survival.

Essential? Yes, no matter how many times one may have heard someone say, "Well if you have time to play games, you have time to ..." (fill in the appropriate phrase). What is sad, however, is that the people who say such things have lost touch with their roots. Gaming is at the heart of our civilization, our society, our very existence. Gaming is our tap root, if you will.

Man is a social animal, preferring to live in the company of others as opposed to isolation. Societies are collectives of individuals who operate within a well-defined set of social conventions, or *rules*. Respected members of society operate within those rules, while those who refuse to abide by the rules are exiled from the society.

Civilizations are highly advanced groupings of societies, all of whom have agreed upon common laws (rules) and a system of government (more rules) for their peaceful coexistence. Regardless of the form of that government, competition is the universal method of establishing rank, structure and status within civilization. Accepting that, let's look a bit deeper.

Games are *competitive* activities involving skill, chance or endurance on the part of two or more participants who play according to a set of rules. Well, one thinks, then all of life is a game. *Yes!* Those who learn to play the game well will prevail. All that differs are our own definitions of winning, for society has already established the consequences of losing.

Consider for a moment the preponderance of the word game and its derivatives in our language. According to the *Random House*



*Dictionary of the English Language*, a *game plan* is either "the overall strategy of a team for winning a specific game" (as in sports) or "a carefully thought-out strategy or course of action, as in politics, business or one's personal affairs." *Playing the game* is both "to act or play in accordance with the rules" and "to act honorably or justly." *Gamesmanship* is "the technique or practice of manipulating people or events so as to gain an advantage or outwit one's opponents or competitors." Don't these inherent meanings imbedded in our very language establish the respect society attributes to a good game player?

Indeed, throughout the history of civilization we have revered successful game players. Further, the higher the stakes of the game being played, the greater the respect afforded the winner. Warriors and generals have always played a game of life and death. And those who have displayed exceptional strategic skill, strength and cunning in their lives remain idolized long after their deaths. Heads of state play for the continued existence and strength of the societies they represent. Captains of industry vie not only for the dollars associated with prosperity, but also the continued viability of the societies they represent (their employees). Face

it, whether one is looking at business, politics, religion, sports, the military or any other facet of our society, *Gamesmanship* virtually equates to *Leadership*.

So what is at stake in electronic gaming? Our future?

Perhaps, but one cannot expect the reader to make that leap of faith just yet. First, it must be recognized that there is a distinct generational gap in electronic gaming. Older gamers were gamers first and electronic gamers second. Our younger members don't know a world without Nintendo, Sega or in the case of the newest arrivals, 3DO or Jaguar. This is problematic, but to understand how much so, one must first recognize how electronic gaming has, in the past, differed from conventional gaming.

Gaming has always been a social pursuit. If it didn't involve the activity of more than one person, it wasn't a game. It was a puzzle or some other pastime, but the interactivity that builds gamesmanship was lacking. Electronic gaming, and more specifically computer gaming, developed to a very large degree as an individual pastime.

Several factors contributed to this trend. Although video game consoles retained their umbilical cords to the family television set, the need for a dedicated monitor removed

computer games from the living room. The architecture of early computers did not lend itself easily to multiplayer design, and a few early attempts failed miserably in the market. As such, many developers came to the conclusion that not only was solitaire play the focus of computer games, but also that their personal quest was to build the best AI engine possible to compete with human opponents.

As a rule, therefore (there were exceptions, like **Mule**, an early EA title), the interactivity offered in computer games was between man and machine, not between men on equal footing. Consequently, what were, or are still, the stakes in these kinds of games. Even now, how often does one hear an exchange like the following:

“Hey, I just beat the boss of Apathy X, way cool!”

“Yeah, so what. I did that weeks ago, bet you can’t beat me!”

The message therein is undeniably clear. There is no honor in beating a machine because it is not a true test of gamesmanship. Unfortunately, a huge segment of the entertainment industry still views the cutting edge of interactivity as finding new ways for us to interact with our *machines*, not with one another. This view goes against the roots of gaming and to a much larger degree, our social needs.

As such, our responsibilities as older gamers are clear. First and foremost, we must be the guardians of the essence of gaming. We must be the leaders that we learned how to be through gaming and



how people think. Even, and here is the scary part, about how they think.

How can we aid this quest? The first step is to return interactivity to its proper form. We must send a clear and true voice to the developers of electronic entertainment. *Stop trying to build the better AI algorithm and go back to designing games.* No one cares if there are Cray Supercomputers that can beat the human Chess Masters anymore. That was an intellectual exercise from the begin-

ning. What we need are more titles like **Terrace** and **Panzer General**, where the game transcends the platform it is played on and players derive the greatest enjoyment and benefit from going head to head with one another.

Let’s use the wonderful technology that emerges daily to promote more interactivity *between gamers*. Yes, it is true that modem and network compatibility is becoming more prominent in game design, but it must become a prerequisite from this point forward. We must boycott game designs that cling to the cult of the one and reawaken

the cult of the many. As technology advances, we must break the cycle of isolation that was only introduced to gaming a scant 15 years ago. We must feed the convergence of technology that will drive *all* games on-line.

Once that dream is realized, it will eliminate our concerns about the passivity involved in our hobby now. We can all go outside our homes, metaphorically speaking, and play together. We will be able to return to our roots and use gaming to develop and reinforce our abilities to both cooperate and compete. Our gamesmanship can gain a global perspective and we can lend our own unique skills and perspective to new players via leadership by example.

Our call to arms is now. Our leadership challenge is clear. Our future is at stake in electronic gaming. Either we can sit back and passively accept the by-products of other people’s visions, or we can remain true to the vision which has spawned both our hobby and our society. We can take gaming back to its roots and revitalize a new generation of players.

And as these new players, some of whom will not be young, return to their other activities in society, they will do so with a new perspective. One that recognizes problems are meant to be overcome; that one feels most interested and alive when they are challenged; that playing the game *with skill* is more important than victory and finally that winning the bigger game of life is a relative thing that depends on the player’s own perspective.

My perspective is simple. When I die, I want the epitaph to read, “*He Struggled Gamely.*”

.....  
by Ed Dille



related activities. We must preserve the social heritage of gaming for subsequent generations of gamers, some of whom will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Let them learn now, when the stakes are low, how to analyze problems, develop strategy, *train their minds!* Let them realize more than they suspect. Sure, gaming is fun, but it can also teach one a helluva lot about

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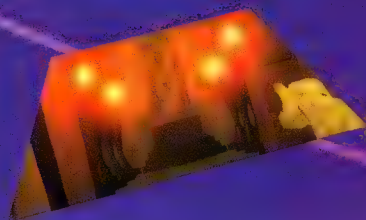
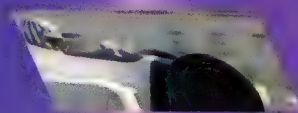
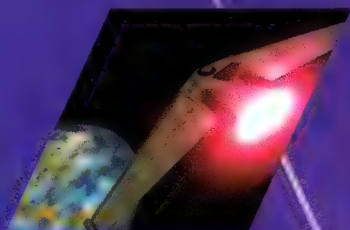
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# LIGHT METAL

**Metal Head fills the mech game niche for the 32X**

The New World Order finally came, if only to save the old one.

Five years after the World Federation government prevented the holocaust of World War III, internecine strife and civil war persisted. To maintain order, the World Federation police forces began using bipedal, armored tanks called Metal Heads (obviously not named to inspire fear).

Metal Heads carried a wide array of weapons, traveled easily over varied terrain and could punch through armor with bare fists. In fact, the hyper-effective mechs were *too* successful. After several years of peace, they led to the "over-militarization" of the federation. Too many 'Heads fell into the hands of anti-world government terrorists. On a fateful day, the terrorists strike, violently tearing away an independent republic from the Federation. This breakaway territory is far too vital to Federation interests to let go without a fight.

To reintegrate these wayward souls into the fold, it is necessary to shoot them. That's where the player comes in. Piloting a Strike Wolf class Metal Head, the player must assault the break-away capital and perform a series of

TECH SPECS	
<b>PUBLISHER:</b>	Sega
<b>SYSTEM:</b>	32X
<b>THEME:</b>	First-Person Combat
<b>MEGABITS:</b>	32
<b>PLAYERS:</b>	1
<b>LEVELS:</b>	6

demolitions. The gamer stalks the city's streets in a first-person, running firefight in dirty, block-to-block warfare.

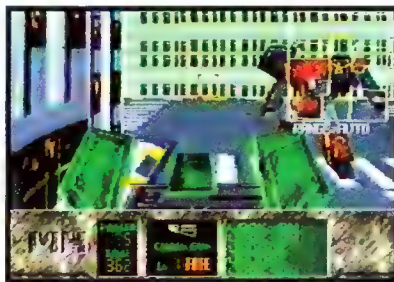
There are six stages, with two or three missions per stage. Before a mission begins, the player is briefed on the actual goals and dangers to be faced, with accompanying video clip and digitized speech.

The digitized speech is fine, but the video is jerky and not at all synchronized. It looks worse than stupid. A gratuitous option allows players to change this video sequence to a more aesthetic bit of Japanimation. This is a rare instance of hand-drawn graphics being more appealing than digitized video. It's better synced to the speech and more convincing than the digital non-acting.

After the briefing, **Metal Head** pilots

are on their own. They roam the streets of the city in a first-person perspective, armed with the default Chain Gun and Grenade Launcher. Enemy units are numerous and varied, and include Metal Heads of the Blue Phantom, Bloody Ox and Covered Tripod varieties plus Beetle Sliders, Hoverpucks, Bushwackers, Twin Snipers, Gutter Rats, Bullfrogs and Cannon Sleds, among others.

Between stages, players can modify their Metal Heads at the Equip Screen (more annoying digitized speech and



video). Here they may replenish ammo and upgrade to more powerful weapons systems like Missile Launchers, Grenade Cannons, Chain Guns and

Lasers. Weapons can be placed on either arm of the Metal Head, while ancillary equipment like Mines, Extra Armor and Extra Speed can be purchased, as long as the player has the points to buy them. Points are earned at the end of every mission, based on the remaining time, remaining armor and ammo, and number of enemies destroyed.

Unbelievably, the players' mech does *not* retain its weapons from mission to mission. The gamer/pilot must buy the equipment new each time, even if the mech just had it in the last scenario. Isn't the player in the employ of the government? Who's stripping the weapons off each time?

This would not be so objectionable if it were at least brought into the context of the game somewhere, but it's not. Instead, it's arbitrary: It just happens, and we don't know why.

A radar display in the upper right-hand corner of the screen gives a tactical view of the city. Blinking yellow circles indicate the location of enemy mechs. As the player's mech takes damage, the radar loses effectiveness, until one blow that knocks the radar out altogether. The player must then wander the city unaided and find the enemy by luck. The city streets are a warren of blind alleys and potential ambush sites. It's best to avoid damage and use the radar to plan sneak attacks from behind.



There are several viewpoints available, a la **Virtua Racer**. The Normal View, from the cockpit, is the default. The Belly View places the perspective lower, between the arms. The Over the Shoulder shows the Metal Head in the screen's foreground. There's also the Eagle's Eye View, which places the perspective high in the air over the Mech.

None of the viewpoints seem more useful than the others, so this is basically just a gimmick. There are two side views (actually useful by allowing one to peer around corners) available only on six-button controllers, which Sega recommends to **Metal Head** players.

The missions start out fairly straightforward, i.e., "find and destroy all enemy mechs in your area." The player will encounter a wide range of enemy units and pulverize them all. Next, the pilot might locate and destroy an

opposing repair depot in the heart of the dark city.

The third mission may find players hunting a specific place to photograph for reconnaissance. After returning with the photo, they must turn around and lead assault aircraft to the spot just reconnoitered, which is mission four. The difficulty

rises very smoothly, and the interlocking missions give the sense of being part of a larger story.

There are numerous options. They allow a bit of flexibility, but on the whole, there are more bells and whistles than actual customizing controls. In addition to the superfluous option that changes the mission briefing from video to animation, there are more controls for listening to background music and sound effects than anything else.

There are three levels of difficulty, which also dictate the number of continues the player begins with. Control Mode allows three different configurations each for three- and six-button controllers. Everything else is gravy. Language allows text in all English or English with Japanese subtitles.

BGM Test, PCM Test and PWM Test let bored gamers listen to every single piece of music, dialogue and sound in the game. At first this is senseless, but after playing **Metal Head** a bit, people will realize that they'll never play the game long enough to hear the music and sound effects otherwise. BGM Speed dictates how fast the unfortunately generic background music plays, but play it will; there's no "off."

The Background Music Test is especially ostentatious: Each piece of music is accompanied by a graphic equalizer and a little, animated keyboard that shows the gamer how to play the piece of music(!).

Don't get us wrong; options are good, options are great, but some games, i.e., **Metal Head**, make one wonder why so much effort was spent on such nice options when the game as a whole cries out for a bit more refinement.

Graphically, **Metal Head** doesn't live up to its promise. At first glance, it looks very good, but the longer one plays, the more flaws are noted. Besides the grating digital video that introduces each mission, the animation is rudimentary. Enemy units slide mechanically from side to side to avoid enemy fire. When they explode, they flip



unrealistically through the air in slow motion, fall to the ground and disappear in unconvincing balls of fire.

At a distance, enemy units sort of break up into the background buildings. This flaw could be called camouflage by generous players, even though it really isn't.

The cityscape itself is well done: The buildings are colorful and distinctive, which is good. Often this is the only way to navigate through the city. Sadly, the buildings are just scenery. Unload a half-dozen explosive shells into the glass of a storefront and nothing happens. It's just a drawing. They may as well have a nice little message on the screen that announces, "You're only playing a game!"

It's an unwritten law that every platform needs a mech war game. This is just a testament to the genre's popularity. Mech games are pretty common, and if we were to rate **Metal Head** against every game out there, it would fare poorly, especially against the games that are great examples of the genre (such as **Iron Soldier** for the Jaguar).

Fortunately for **Metal Head** (and, perhaps, unfortunately for 32X owners who don't own a Jag), it's the only mech game in 32X town. Since we try to rate games against other games on the same platform, **Metal Head** will rate higher than if it had to face-off against any other mech game.

Aside from its other flaws, **Metal Head** commits a thematic fault and places gamers on the side of Big Government. They're crushing people who are resisting the establishment. It's not a coincidence that so many games put the player on the side of the small, desperate, underpowered rebels fighting the big, evil empire. It's more melodramatic and noble to be the doomed revolutionary than to be another hired gun for the empire.

32X players who're dying for a mech game will just have to cash a World Federation paycheck until something better comes along. **C+** (John W. Hardin)

# TAKE ME OUT TO THE BRAWL GAME

Punch-Out meets SF2 in EA's *Toughman Contest*

Toughman competitions got started in the U.S. back in the '70s, at a point where both professional boxing and pro wrestling were languishing in the horse latitudes. Fight fans would gripe endlessly about the lack of old-fashioned, Graziano Zale-type ring action, while Hulk

Hogan was still a 98-pound weakling named Terry Bollea, living in Florida. A vacuum was created, and the Toughman tournaments were born.

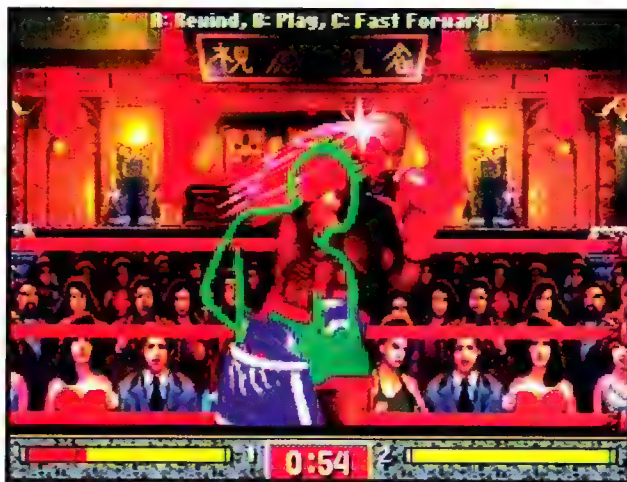
The idea behind these competitions was simple; the operators wanted two, real-world testosterone cases to punch the boogers out of one another.



The audience did not come in search of pugilistic prowess, it wanted to see brute power manifest in its crudest form. They weren't looking for polished ring generals, they were looking for bar brawlers and truckstop donnybrookers in full cry. This sport, in other words, was about *fighting*, not boxing.

Over the years, Toughman competitions have remained a peripheral part of the American sports scene, leading directly to even more violent, no-holds-barred spectacles such as the popular Ultimate Fighting Championships.

**Toughman Contest**, from EA Sports, is a free-swinging electronic adaptation of these wild-eyed slugfests, with the player represented by a transparent onscreen fighter. The game uses the classic **Punch-Out** perspective, with the



player-character in the middle foreground and the opponent facing the screen directly. However, unlike the **Punch-Out** games, where the see-through p-c is modeled and given depth and dimension, here they receive only an outline. This creates a flat look, with the opposing brawler visible through the transparent p-c. The *problem* with this approach is that it is extremely difficult to tell who's hitting who once the action gets started. Punches are thrown in both directions, and we hear them land, but the visual cues that are necessary to

## PUNCHING OUT

**Toughman Contest** was designed in the style of Nintendo's **Punch-Out**, with its transparent, faux first-person player surrogate.

The first **Punch-Out** game appeared in the arcades back in the middle '80s, scoring a knockout in the coin-op arena with its multifaceted, see-through player-character. When Nintendo's NES caught on, the game was translated to the 8-Bit medium, but instead of being transparent, the p-c was now simply ... short. In fact, he was *so* short, many felt the game should have been titled **Punch-Up**.

More recently, however, **Super Punch-Out** was issued for the SNES, reminding players of the original game's powerful and long-standing appeal.

determine who got hit are sadly lacking.

Otherwise, this is a fairly entertaining romp that requires no great skill to master. The game offers three play modes: exhibition, and tournament vs. either the CPU or up to seven other human players. The game comes with 24 prefab fighters, encompassing a variety of skills and styles.

The actual *mano-a-mano* combat system uses only the A, B and C buttons on the Genesis controller (no special programming for six-button fighting controllers), with all special punches generated through a tap-oriented play style, rather than the sweeping direction pad movements of **Street Fighter II**. The tapping *can* get out of hand—the Popeye Punch, for example, requires the player to tap the B button eight times—but it does limit the number of special D-pad movements that the player must memorize.

The repertoire of standard punches includes jabs (left and right), hooks (left and right) and uppercuts. Hooks and jabs can be thrown to either the head or the body. There are 14 extra-special punches, with each fighter assigned several of these specialty maneuvers, as well as combinations, counterattacks, power punch patterns and a so-called Kill Punch.

Learning the styles and patterns of the various fighters does take time, but the learning curve is fairly rapid. There are also the usual bevy of special codes (RUBE, for example, generates the "Director's Cut" version on which player two is headless and there is blood everywhere) to juice up play.

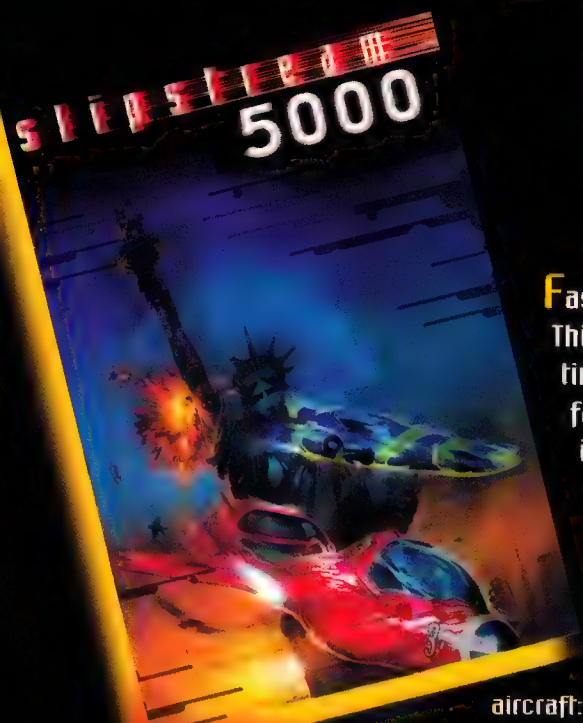
For a 32-Meg game, **Toughman Contest** is not visually impressive. The backdrops range from mediocre to dreadful (the barroom background looks like something from the electronic stone age), and the fight animations are a long way from state of the art. There are several cute post-punch animations (with fighters sailing backward out of the ring, or bouncing, yoyo-like, off the ropes), but most players will wonder where the memory went.

**Toughman Contest** is not likely to be anyone's favorite game, but most action fans should find it sufficiently entertaining to keep them playing. Unfortunately, its limitations are as strong as its appeal. **B-** (Bill Kunkel)

## TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** EA Sports  
**SYSTEM:** Genesis  
**THEME:** Fighting  
**MEGABITS:** 32  
**PLAYERS:** 1-8  
**LEVELS:** N/A

# Light Years Ahead of Everything Else!



## Slipstream 5000

**F**asten your seat belts. Slipstream 5000 is here on PC CD-ROM. This 3D aerial combat racing game hurls you through space and time with the intensity of a lightning bolt. But much, much faster. You'll rocket through exotic lands in the future, choosing the outrageous aircraft and insane weaponry that will help you blast your way to the finish. It's real. It's fast. It's real fast. Play Slipstream 5000, but wear your leathers, this game could tear your skin off.

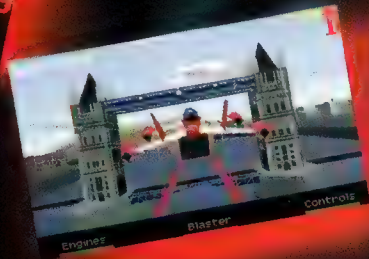
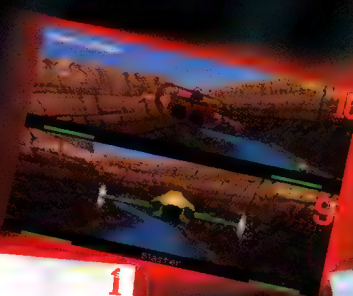
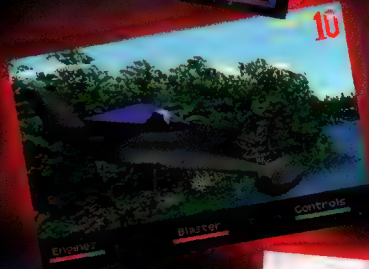
### GAME FEATURES:

**P**layers can compete as one of 10 characters in a unique Slipstream aircraft: each with different features, weapons and distinctive styles.

**I**ncredible 3-D rendered and texture-mapped graphics create a dramatic and realistic picture of the future featuring 10 dramatic global circuits and multi-directional track splits.

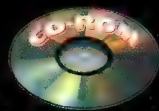
**S**imultaneous 2-Person game play. Network, Serial and Modem-Link options.

**I**ntant replay featuring spectacular moves and crashes



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# THE EASE OF ADVENTURE

Sega joins arcade action with an RPG in *Beyond Oasis*

In the land of Oasis, two sorcerers clashed. Reharl had a wondrous Gold Armlet that allowed him control over the spirits. Agito wore a Silver Armlet causing destruction wherever he chose. The brutal battle destroyed them both leaving the land in peace. Until one day...

**Beyond Oasis** is an adventure/role-playing game along the same vein as Nintendo's *Zelda* series. This one-player game puts the player in control of Ali, a young treasure hunter who is about to embark on an amazing journey. While searching for treasure one day, Ali comes across the mystical Gold Armlet. He learns that this amazing item will allow him to call upon the spirits (if he can find them). He also learns that he will need all of the help he can get to defeat the evil being that has shown up with the Silver Armlet.

There are four spirits for Ali to call upon. Dyto is the Water Spirit, and along with two attacks has the ability to heal our hero. Efreet is the Fire Spirit, a large and powerful attacker. Shade is the Spirit of Darkness and acts as an assistant, helping Ali reach places and treasures that would otherwise be inaccessible. Finally there is Bow, the Spirit of the Earth, who can open doors and keep enemies at bay.

In addition to the Spirits, Ali also has a variety of weapons at his disposal. This coupled with both regular and



special attacks (requiring various button and keypad combinations) makes Ali a formidable Hero indeed.

While **Beyond Oasis** is a decent game, there are several things that keep it from being a great one.

The first problem is the control over the character. Game companies have tried for some time to come up with a great combination of action and adventure. While it is certainly possible to mix the two genres, it isn't easy to come up with satisfying results. The controls for **Beyond**

**Oasis** can be extremely annoying. If I really wanted to move my pad in a variety of directions before attacking, I would play **Street Fighter II**. In an adventure game, the adventure should take precedence over the action aspects. Although there is nothing wrong with making the character actually duke it out with the bad guys (rather than fight via menu as in the **Phantasy Star** series), adding different key combinations seems overly cumbersome. Of course there are those who will disagree with this and possible even give the game additional credit for employing

this system. Indeed, if that was the only problem, it would be easily excusable.

The biggest problem with the game is the ease of the tasks and the fact that the game is far too linear.

All throughout the game, players can call up a map that will lead them in the direction they need to go. As each new task is assigned, the map will show your current position and your next destination. This removes much of the exploration aspect of the game. The map would be more useful if it tracked where you have been, as a reference, rather than as an instrument to run through the game as quickly as possible.

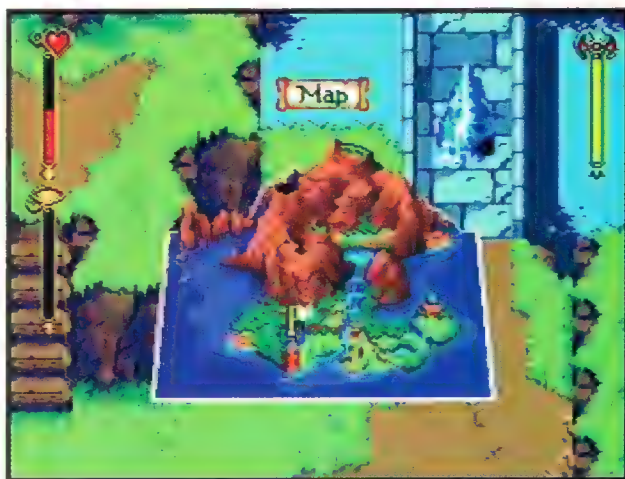
This game is both easy enough and short enough that this sort of map is a detraction rather than an enhancement.

The graphics in the game are excellent, with large characters and fluid animations. The cut scenes are well drawn in the style of classic Japanimation and help to move the story along nicely.

The sound is also very good and does not drone on or get annoying if you play for an extended period of time.

Other than the button/pad combinations needed for some of the attacks, the controls react well and the menu system for accessing items is easy to use.

Overall, **Beyond Oasis** is a good attempt to bring the excitement of the **Zelda** series to the Genesis. The game is very straightforward and easy to figure



out, making it perfect for beginning adventure gamers of all ages.

It is only the experienced gamer who will be disappointed by the ease and length of the game. **C-** (Marc Camron)



## TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** Sega  
**SYSTEM:** Genesis  
**THEME:** Adventure/RPG  
**MEGABITS:** 24  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**LEVELS:** N/A

# IT'S WHAT TV WAS INVENTED FOR... BUST A MOVE!



Bust-A-Move is the new puzzle solving game that will have you busting for hours. Line up three of the same color balloons and bust them before they come towering down.

You can play alone or split the screen to bust a friend. There's even a handicapping option so the whole family can play. Find out what TV was invented for and Bust-A-Move!

**TAITO**

Taito America Corporation

**THE FINAL GRADE**

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

	Arnie Katz EDITOR	Marc Capron SENIOR EDITOR	Bill Kunkel EXECUTIVE EDITOR	Steven Keet L.A. TIMES
Aerobiz Supersonic	B+	A-	B	-
Alien vs. Predator	A-	B	A	A-
Adv. of Batman	B-	C	C+	B
Boogerman	B-	C-	B	C
Brandish	B-	B-	B+	-
Burn: Cycle	-	C+	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-
Final Fantasy III	A	A+	A+	A-
Illusion of Gaia	B+	B	A	B+
Immercenary	A-	B+	A	C-
Indiana Jones G.A.	B	B-	B	-
Iron Soldier	A-	-	A	B+
Izzy's Quest	B	-	B	-
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	B+
Kasumi Ninja	C-	F	D	D+
LaRussa Baseball '95	C+	C	C+	-
Lion King, The	A-	A	A	B+
Mickey Mania	A	A	A	A
Need for Speed	A-	B+	B+	B+
Off-World Interceptor	C+	C	C+	A
Pac Attack	B	A-	A	C
Phantasy Star IV	B	C+	B-	B
Pitfall: Mayan Adv.	B+	A	B+	-
Rise of the Robots	B-	C+	B+	C-
Ristar	A	B	A-	A
Shockwave	B+	B+	A	B+
Slayer	B-	C	B	C+
Starfleet Academy	A	A	A	A-
Supreme Warrior	B	C	B	C+
Syndicate	B	B-	B+	B
Uniracers	A-	A	A	A
Vay	C+	B	B	-
Way of the Warrior	A+	A-	A	D
X-Men (SNES)	C+	C-	B	B



Take control of Psylock and battle the scourge of the planet in *The X-Men 2*.

**Primal Rage** (*Time Warner Interactive/Genesis, SNES*) **Primal Rage** turned a lot of heads in arcades with the menacing roars and sounds of its dinosaurs and other creatures. Although Time Warner Interactive (TWI) managed to capture the sound effects and music that made the on-screen action so exciting in the arcade version, the graphics lose their realism and look when translated to the small screen. **Primal Rage** is a fighting game in which players control elaborately animated, stop-motion, prehistoric creatures in a variety of appropriate settings. The game has less moves than other fighting games, but makes up for it in fun and variety. TWI made an admirable conversion despite the shrunken graphics. **B** (*Russ Ceccola*)

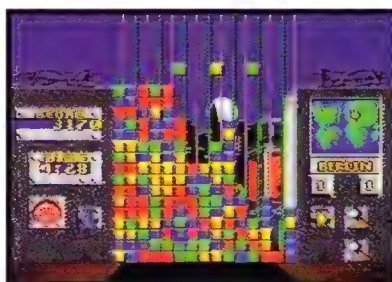
movies and the first TV series, complete with original dialogue. The controls are intuitive and easy to master, there are



many scenarios and missions, and loads of fun in this cart, which is perhaps the best yet in the *Star Trek* genre. **A** (*John W. Hardin*)

**BreakThru!** (*Spectrum HoloByte/SNES*) An excellent computer game, one of the series endorsed by Alexey Pajitnov, and somewhat reminiscent of Tetris, this one

**No Escape** (*Psygnosis/Genesis*) This ambitious cart wants to be more than a side-scrolling action game. Players take the star part played by Ray Liotta in the 1994 movie and attempt to flee a prison island from which no one ever escapes. The action is side perspective, but there is much interaction with non-player characters, puzzle solving and strategy in exploring the island. Situations can be resolved via force or wits; different objects can be combined to make new tools, some of which are essential for escape. Likewise, at some points, violence is the only solution. The controls are weak, mainly due to poor registration. The interface and mix of gaming



is slightly less satisfactory on the console because it requires a game pad for control instead of a mouse. The idea is to eliminate all the blocks comprising a wall. Most of the blocks come in a variety of colors; place the cursor on any set of adjacent blocks of the same color, click the action button and that set is eliminated, and any blocks above fall down to replace it. Other blocks help or hinder the effort, and more arrive from the top. Difficulty levels involve more colors and timing. The game is addictive, but on the SNES it would have been improved if the designers had included the option to use the Mario mouse. **B** (*Ross Chamberlain*)



styles is intriguing. Unfortunately the license isn't: Tying the game to this not-exactly-blockbusting B movie has probably killed it. **C** (*John W. Hardin*)

**Star Trek: Star Fleet Academy Starship Bridge Simulator** (*Interplay/SNES*) Enroll in Starfleet Academy, in the era of the original series, and lead a team of fellow cadets on a series of increasingly complex simulator training missions. The Basic Training missions acquaint gamers with the ship's control systems, Advanced missions test the student captain's logic and strategy skills, while the Combat Simulator allows one or two contestants to face off in a variety of classic Federation, Klingon and Romulan ships. Gamers can also try their hands at scenarios from *Trek*

**Val d'Isle Skiing and Snowboarding** (*Atari/Jaguar*) Here's a genre we haven't seen lately: the old faux first-person ski and snowboarding simulator. The background graphics are superb, the player-character animations are solid and the game control is good in this French-produced game (developed by Virtual Studio under Atari's direction). Unfortunately, however, the game is still something of a drag, with players limited to steering their surrogates endlessly left and right and jumping the occasional mogul. Bottom line: **Val d'Isere** really needs some great stunts and trick

# GREAT THE ONE



Tony Amonte



Chris Chelios



Kirk Muller



Pavel Bure



Russ Courtnall



Sergei Fedorov



Marty McSorley

NHLPA PLAYERS (OVER 600)

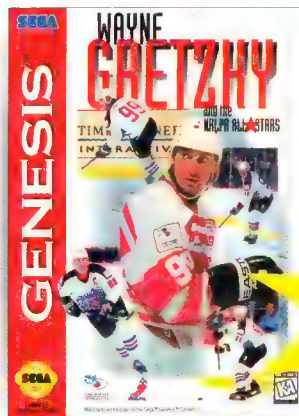
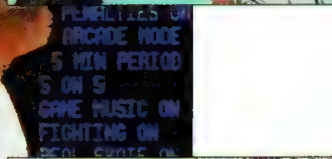
## GREAT

### FEATURES

- 26 Teams
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- Two gameplay modes: Arcade and Simulation
- Instant "Just Play" option
- Battery backup saves your season and tournament stats

## GREAT

### GRAPHICS



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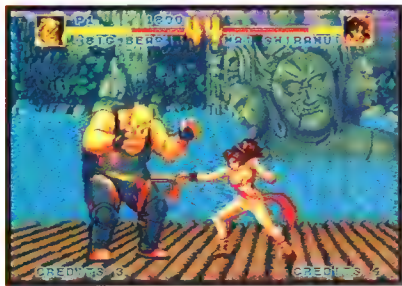


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moves to get its blood flowing. (The Jaguar library needs a quality baseball and basketball sim a lot more than it needs a skiing game.) **L+** (Bill Kunkel)

**Fatal Fury Special** (JVC/Sega CD) It's beginning to look as if the Sega CD may not be the ideal venue for fighting games. Following several earlier disappointments (most notably the horrendous Sega CD edition of **Mortal Kombat**), this SNK coin-op and Neo-Geo classic looks and plays like weak tea in this multimedia format. The characters look okay when standing still, and all the moves are there, but the



animations are mediocre, and virtually all background movement has been eliminated. Looks like Sega CD fight game fans will have to wait for **Eternal Champions** to arrive. **L+** (Bill Kunkel)

**Corpse Killer** (Digital Pictures/3DO) Famed executive producers Tom Zito and Tyler Johnson have put together a cinematic shooter with a compelling



zombie theme. As a special forces lieutenant, the gamer must travel to Cay Noir, rescue the newly zombified members of the squad and stop the legions of the undead before they can further their power by extending their domain. Exotic locales and memorable characters like Winston the rasta driver and Julie the reporter, can't mask the limited interactivity. The user selects the right ammo, aims the cursor with the direction button and blasts the hordes of reanimated adversaries. Co-designers Ken Soohoo and Kenneth Melville provide a strategic component in the form of varied attackers and a range of inventory items, but the graphics and sound are the most compelling elements. **L** (Arnie Katz)

**Road Rash 3** (EA/Sega CD) Surprise, surprise! **Road Rash 3** is a superb



translation of the 3DO neo-classic, with first-rate animations, good play action and a shockingly state-of-the-art overall appearance—on the Sega CD! Players select surrogate bikers—some of whom are armed with chains or crowbars—and compete over five different locations; qualify on all tracks and advance to the next level. Players can also trade in their vehicle for a new chopper with their winnings. Among the most impressive pieces of software on the Sega CD, this is a must-have selection. **A** (Bill Kunkel)

**X-Men 2: Clone Wars** (Sega/Genesis)

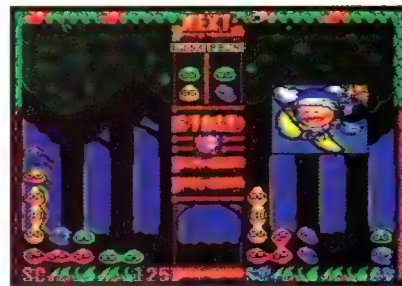
**Clone Wars** features one of the most unique openings in the history of video gaming: The contest begins on the fly, without credits or prelude of any type. This interactive intro, unhappily, progresses into a totally routine platform contest once the opening scenario plays out. Players take turns as various X-Men, including Cyclops (who fires lethal optic blasts), Wolverine (an overly aggressive runt with an unbreakable skeleton and adamantium claws), Gambit, etc. There are lots of mazes and minipuzzles, but overall this game is markedly inferior to Capcom's SNES X-Men series. **L** (Bill Kunkel)

**Slopestyle** (L3/3DO) Professional snowboarding footage explodes onto the interactive learning screen in Jon Rosen's celebration of this fast and colorful sport. Again employing the "learning cube" interface L3 introduced last year, **Slopestyle** offers 27 close-up lessons to would-be practitioners of this increasingly popular, extreme winter sport. An alternative rock music score accompanies 50 minutes of FMV. It has some of the thrills and none of the frostbite, which may be an appealing trade-off for many armchair boarders. **B** (Arnie Katz)

**Kirby's Avalanche** (Nintendo/SNES)

The familiar cartoonish character hosts a one- or two-player puzzle game. This "tris" variation tests the players' ability to line up similarly colored falling blobs in groups of four or more. When four blobs of the same hue glom together, it

creates boulders on the opponents' side of the play screen. Chain-reaction blob explosions trigger avalanches of boulders that thoroughly disrupt normal play and virtually guarantee a victory. A fanciful story about a nationwide avalanche tournament strings together individual games. This may make the game more engaging for younger SNESers, but it's apt to frustrate those who just want to get on with the game. The graphics and sound are extremely cute, another indication that Nintendo probably intends **Kirby's Avalanche** for the youngest segment of the console gaming audience. A practice mode and on-screen prompting features like a preview of the



next pair of blobs make this brain game especially appropriate for those for whom standard **Tetris** may be too demanding. **L+** (Arnie Katz)

**Snatcher** (Konami/Sega CD) Fifty years after half the Earth's population is wiped out by an accidentally released biological weapon, Japan is being invaded by "bio-roid" life forms. These Terminator-like machines replicate humans to the point of being able to sweat and bleed. Prominent individuals are being "snatched" and replaced by the sinister androids. Players take the role of Gillian Seed, who has just joined the anti-snatcher Japanese Undercover Neuro-Kinetic Elimination Rangers (JUNKERS for short). Gillian is desperate for answers because he and his wife have had amnesia for three years. After training in the Special Forces, Gillian has left his wife to fight the snatchers because the fearsome robots are the only shared memory they have. First made in 1988 for the Japanese 8-Bit PC engine, **Snatcher** has been souped up and re-released. While the game play is a bit dated, the style is classic anime, and the implementation is some of the best ever on a Japanese conversion: beautiful art and sound, flawlessly translated documentation, text and digitized speech; the animation is even synchronized to the speech! Apart from a few patent absurdities in the story (sure, the special forces admit amnesiacs all the time) and a too-linear plot, a 7-year-old game is one of the better ones for the Sega CD this year. **A-** (John Hardin)

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# ROLL YOUR OWN

**Klik & Play** allows users into the game-creation process

It is almost inevitable that at some point in the life of every electronic game fan, the notion of actually *making* a game will be born. After playing these contests for hundreds of thousands of hours, we develop an intimacy with them, an intuitive understanding of how they affect us. Being creative life forms, we yearn to emulate the game designers and programmers who gave us such rewarding fare.

At this point, however, the mission is over for 99 percent of all gamers before it even begins. The problem is that these creative processes are almost totally oblique and unavailable to the average user, who can take a stab at the design part of the equation, but will invariably be stopped short of execution.

Game creators have attempted to share the creative process with users since the earliest days of computer gaming [see sidebar]. Unfortunately, the brute fact is that programming is difficult, and learning a programming language is not appreciably easier than learning to speak and write Chinese or Russian. As a result, game construction kits have traditionally taken one of two paths: They could attempt to teach the user a more accessible computer

## TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** Maxis  
**DESIGNER:** Europress  
**SYSTEM:** PC-CD  
**THEME:** Game Creation  
**HD SPACE:** 2MB  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**LEVELS:** N/A

language, or they could narrow the scope and limit the user to a single genre. While the former approach opened users up to any type of game construction, it also forced them to learn programming, albeit in streamlined format, thereby greatly limiting the potential sales.

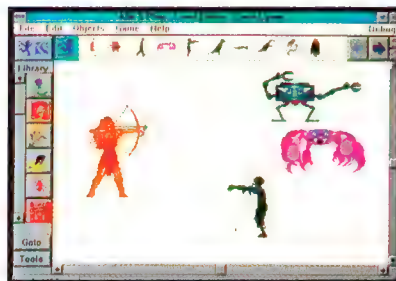
The latter approach was more successful, but it also severely limited the possible user output. After all, an adventure or arcade game construction kit doesn't do much for someone interested in creating a strategy contest, sports or flight sim. The former format, on the other hand, permitted wider potential user expression, but restricted the fun to quasi-programmers.

As a result, this category slowly faded from the software scene during

the late '80s, leaving wanna-be game-makers restricted to the realm of fantasy and daydreams.

Until now.

**Klik & Play** was born in the minds of Francois Lionet and Yves Lamoureux of Europress Software and was soon spotted by Maxis. The publisher provided the ideal home for the greatest game creation program ever realized. For years, Maxis has permitted computerists to experience simulations of life at every level, from the microcosmic (**Sim Ant**) to the macrocosmic (**SimLife**).



Now it has opened up the game design universe, allowing users to create games as easily as they constructed make-believe urban landscapes in **SimCity**. This product has been a long time in the

fine-tuning process—**Klik & Play** was first shown in the U.S. almost a year ago—but the wait was more than worth it. For the first time, software is now available that permits *anyone* to explore the nuts and bolts of game-building.



Here's how it works: First, the computerists must decide how deeply they wish to explore this game-making business. The initial menu screen offers the following options: Play a Game, Modify a Game, Create a Game and Tutorial. It is recommended that newcomers begin by checking out the 10 prefabricated games that are enclosed on the disk. The games are all pretty elementary, single-screen entertainments including several strategy contests, sci-fi arcade shooters, a soccer shootout, a music game, etc. But then, they aren't being included for their play value; these games are submitted as samples, which the user can then pull apart in order to see how it all works. These games can be modified, or parts can be used in original creations.

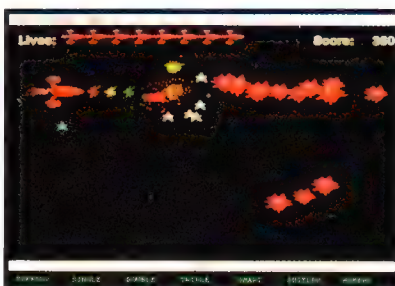
Once a game is loaded, or the user opts to forge a new game from scratch, the processes involved are dealt with in a straightforward, non-technical manner, using a combination of icons and menus. The Storyboard Editor, for example, allows access to picture frames, animation frames and level frames. If the level frames are selected, the user is automatically transported to the next set of options, such as Setup (sets the size of the playfield) or the various editing options: Level Editor, Step Through Editor and Event Editor. The Level Editor, in turn, lets you design level screens, place objects, designate movement logic or generate animation.

The Step Through option actually autoplays the game, then automatically stops the action when an "event" occurs. For example, let's say you're designing a Breakout-type contest, and the ball strikes the paddle. The action then automatically stops, and the user is asked to determine what happens next, through a series of menus. Should the ball go through the paddle? Should it blow up the paddle? Or, perhaps, it ought to bounce back up, away from the paddle. The Step Through Editor tackles every event, checking with the user along the

way, until the game's logic system is complete.

The Event Editor, meanwhile, offers ambitious users a god-like control over all potential game events. It produces a "script" that the characters and objects on screen will follow and allows the designer to introduce features such as bonus lives, while also determining when various objects and characters will appear in the game.

Certainly, it would be absurd to imagine that anyone will create a homemade version of **Virtua Fighters** or **7th Guest** with **Klik & Play**, just as having a movie camera isn't sufficient to produce the next *Apocalypse Now*. But we can hope that most users will not harbor such unrealistic expectations. If, on the other hand, you've always wanted to produce your own take on *Capture the Flag*, or any of the early arcade classics, this program offers the most user-



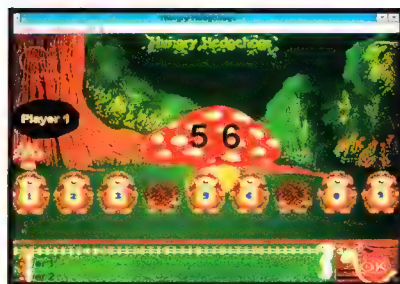
responsive and enlightening experience ever available to non-professionals. There is no complex language to learn, and users never finds themselves in that most terrible of positions: alone on an empty screen with no idea of how to make something—anything—happen.

There are plenty of neat props provid-

**GAME TECHNICIAN**

In the early and mid-'80s, several roll-your-own game programs appeared on the market. Electronic Arts led the way with its Construction Set line, including the **Pinball** and **Adventure Construction Sets**, and followed up with the **Racing Demolition Set**, in which game enthusiasts could set up their own track designs.

But the most ambitious program of the type produced prior to **Klik & Play** was almost certainly Dan Kitchen's **Game Maker** from Activision. For this program, Dan regurgitated basic boolean logic (i.e., if-then statements, etc.) in his own original language for the C64. The game was later converted and editions appeared on both the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga.



ed, of course, all available through a series of Library icons, ranging from Backdrops, Homes & Buildings and Household Items, to Player Characters, NPCs plus Heaven, Earth, Fire and Water. There's even a simple sprite animation program that allows computerists to modify or redraw characters and objects in motion.

The Tutorial is superb, walking the user by the hand through each step in the game-creation process. But even those who are reluctant to read instruction books or watch tutorials will find themselves easily jumping right into the action.

What Europress and Maxis have created here is a new programming language for the Macintosh/Windows era computer gamer. While it doesn't allow the user to get into code issues and other more sophisticated components of the design and programming dynamic, the combination of superb iconography and the pristine logic of the event-driven menu system will provide an insight into the entire process, which will make even jaded veterans drop their jaws in delight and amazement.

Who will enjoy this program? Kids should love it; it's easy, it's fun and most young users will have a ball simply changing the rules on the generic prefab games included in the package. Would-be game designers, meanwhile, will find this an excellent primer on the subject. It will give them some sense of the incredible plethora of detail involved in the whole process, while simultaneously allowing them to actually see the results of their work—something even the best non-programming designers rarely have an opportunity to view during the design phase.

As for adults who aren't especially interested in becoming the next David Perry, there is surely entertainment value to be gained from the ability to look inside something one has taken for granted for so long. After all, the many purchasers of **Sim Ant** must have been seeking something other than practice for reincarnation as a bug at some point down the evolutionary road.

This is one of the finest products to be released in 1995, and is the best product of its type *ever* produced. Very highly recommended. **A+** (Bill Kunkel)

# CAUGHT IN A FRAME

Slip thru the *Shadows of Cairn* to clear Quinn's name

It's tough being an honest person, especially when you're a thief. Just ask Quinn (a.k.a. Our Hero). Born poor in the fortress-city of Cairn and orphaned at six, he had no money and found that the only guild that would accept him was the Order of Thieves

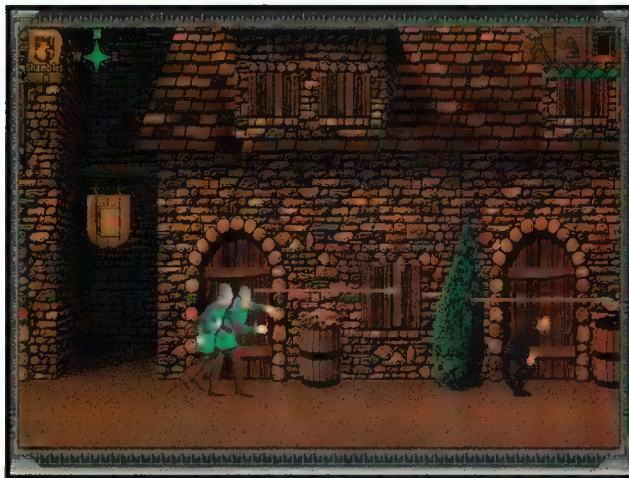
and Beggars. He had two choices: become a Beggar and face losing some vital or otherwise irreplaceable part of his anatomy, or become a Thief. It wasn't a hard decision.

Unfortunately, although Quinn does extremely well in his studies and is considered a master of the larcenous arts, he has one fatal flaw: He is excruciatingly honest. He can't steal to save his life or his career. By 18, he still hasn't gained journeyman status, and his talents are being wasted on household chores such



as cooking and cleaning. Finally his master gives him an ultimatum: He must steal something valuable within a week, thus justifying the guild's investment in him, or find new employment as a Beggar. "You'd look pitiful without any legs," Quinn's master says. "And sores, lots of sores."

Understandably reluctant to join the cadre of the cadgers, Quinn squares himself up and decides he must overcome his natural integrity and go out and swipe something. His first attempt, to steal a jeweled hairbrush, is a dismal failure. Still determined, he goes into



the Thieves' Trophy Room and borrows a set of magic lock picks. No sooner has he done so when he hears someone coming and quickly finds a dim corner to hide in. He is surprised when he sees his master and the Earl of Glaster. He is shocked to hear them plotting the death of Duke Levot of Montchaud, who lives in the castle at the very pinnacle of Cairn. And he is horrified when he realizes that they're planning to pin the crime on him. Not much he can do about it, though—his master sees him and has him knocked unconscious and cast into a cell.

But Quinn has his extraordinary skill and the magic lock picks. He removes his chains, goes through a trap door and sets out to find the Duke and stop the plot against his life. To do this, he must travel the high and low roads of Cairn, a city-fortress built roughly in the shape of a pyramid and divided vertically by socio-economic class—which means he's starting at the very bottom.

So begins one infuriating, obsessing, frustrating and occasionally monotonous adventure. Almost all of the aforementioned is told in a fairly long introductory piece of animation that, while occasionally making one cringe away from the clichés, is amusing.

One of the most frustrating aspects of *Shadows of Cairn* is that it doesn't use a mouse for game play. The mouse can be used to click on the three icons on the screen (all three of which are for actions that can be done on the joystick as well), or to access the menu, but to actually play the game the player must

use either the keyboard or a joystick. This is good for joystick users. This is not good for mousers. The keyboard is slow and clumsy, and even joystick users may find that the game play can be irritatingly inexact.

Quinn's travels take him through the streets of Cairn and through its sewers, down into deep, dark dungeons, up into castle corridors and everywhere in between. In his quest to unmask the plot against the Duke (and get himself off the hook for the crime), he must seek help from a great many people—all of whom, naturally, ask him to do them favors in return. Another frustrating aspect arises here: the dungeons and sewers can be extremely difficult. Between the slime monsters and the endless, monotonous hallways, the sewers are truly hideous. And the dungeons! One false step and the player learns the true meaning of the phrase, "blood red." It seems like it takes forever before one actually gets through all the traps in the dungeons—and remember, that's just on the easy setting.

*Shadows of Cairn* is played from a full-screen, eye-level view, which is a delight for those players used to RPG screens. The graphics are a delight as well. In fact, the graphics are dynamite and make up for a lot. The music isn't bad either, if you like action music, and even if you don't, it sounds great. Both the music and the voice soundtrack were recorded in stereo, and if the player has a 16-Bit sound card and good speakers, the sound in this game can be truly impressive. If not, the kHz can be set down from 44 to 22 or even 11, allowing those players with 8-Bit cards to enjoy the music as well.

The creators of the game point out that the stereo effects are best enjoyed through headphones. Other family members might appreciate this, too.

There are times when the player may be inspired to give up on this game. The problem is that it gets under the skin, and players who swore they'd never get in front of the damn thing again have gone back in, determined to beat whatever it was that drove them away.

Besides, Quinn really needs the help. It may, as Mel Brooks says, be good to be the King, but it's murder being an honest thief. **B-** (Sara Slaymaker)

## TECH SPECS

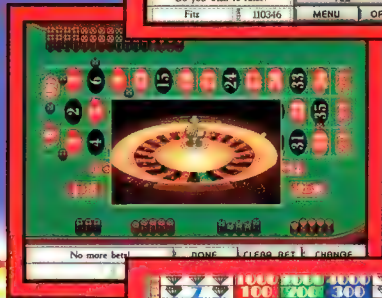
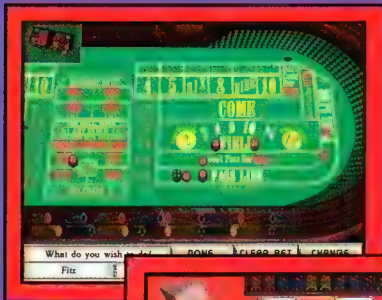
**PUBLISHER:** Masque Publishing  
**DESIGNER:** Ant Software  
**SYSTEM:** PC CD-ROM  
**THEME:** Action/Adventure  
**RAM:** 4 MB  
**HD SPACE:** Play from ROM  
**PLAYERS:** 1

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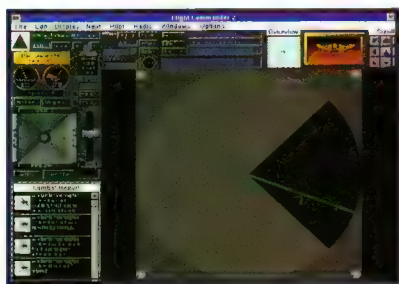
# TACTICAL OMISSIONS

## Limited warfare is redefined in *Flight Commander II*

From Korea to the modern battlefield, Avalon Hill's *Flight Commander II* puts the player in command of air battles around the world. A turn-based board game, **FC2** mixes incredible attention to detail and combat accuracy with grievous interface oversights resulting in an enjoyable, but occasionally frustrating, board game.

The player controls either the Attacker or the Defender against either the computer or a play-by-mail human opponent. In the battle, players are allocated either an absolute number of aircraft per side or an allotment of C points to purchase the aircraft they wish to use. The battle ends when one side is destroyed or chooses to withdraw.

Alternatively, **FC2** contains five campaigns. Ranging from Vietnam to the Falklands to Central Europe, campaigns consist of a series of pre-defined, pre-equipped missions. Individual mission performance determines the outcome of the overall campaign.



The aviation enthusiast will find much to like in **FC2**. Aircraft, weapons and other systems operate quite realistically. Early model AIM-7 Sparrows, for example, are notoriously inaccurate. An F-4 Phantom can't begin to out-turn a MiG-21. Weather impacts weapon and flight performance. Radar systems accurately model the strengths and limitations of real-world counterparts.

**FC2** does not use a hex-board system. Instead, aircraft can face any one of eight directions from zero to 315

degrees in 45-degree increments as well as pitching up or down. Players use the mouse to maneuver an on-screen representation of a joystick to guide each individual aircraft. During the action phase, players adjust each aircraft's throttle, make any necessary stick movements and operate radar and weapon systems (usually limited to "attempting a lock on" or "firing a weapon"). The subsequent action and movement phases move both opponents' aircraft simultaneously and resolve missile and cannon attacks.

The attention to detail, the relative capabilities and limitations of aircraft and weapons, the maneuver scheme and the general flow of battle are above reproach. The same cannot be said of the interface. For example, certain scenarios (such as Vietnam) require U.S. forces to positively identify targets before firing on them, effectively limiting the use of long-range missiles. As U.S. pilots actually did under those circumstances, **FC2** recommends the player sends one aircraft in at high speed, identify the targets and depart the area while wingmen launch long-range missiles from relative safety. Unfortunately, the visual identification rules seem to suffer glitches. During one Vietnam campaign, bandits visually identified by the spotter plane were not acknowledged by the wingmen, who refused to fire weapons. During other scenarios, the visual identification system worked as intended, but failures of the system rendered a particular scenario effectively unplayable.

The actual command interface lacks important characteristics. First, there is no easy way to abort a mission and start over save by completely exiting the game and restarting. If the player chooses to stop a poorly advancing battle and start over, there's little choice except to either exit and start over or allow the computer to play both sides and complete the mission on its own (a very time-consuming alternative).

Second, the two main maps are just the right size to be wrong. The overview map is so minute it is effectively useless while the magnification of the main view map cannot be effectively reduced. While not fatal design errors, these problems make game play annoying or unnecessarily difficult.

Worse, players have no control over unit positioning in the single battle mode. Players may choose to attack a particular target, designate an appropriate number of attack and escort aircraft, then enter the mission to find their forces scattered randomly across the map. Fighter escorts fully equipped with look-down radar often begin as low as 3,000 feet while unarmed attack aircraft begin above 10,000. Players cannot devise and employ a coherent strike plan; rather they must make do with an apparently random position of combat assets in hostile airspace. The manual cites this random ability as providing an infinite number of games; however, any serious wargamer will find the lack of strategic planning and ability to effectively control strike packages as serious shortcomings. During the Gulf War, support units (such as wild weasels) dealt with air defenses first, then strike aircraft arrived at one-minute intervals. The result: total surprise and complete target destruction. Such combined arms tactics are unavailable in **FC2**.

**FC2** players, therefore, must focus on minute tactical situations such as a two-versus-two air combat or four-versus-eight air combat. A situation where four F-117s attack an enemy base moments after EF-111s and F-4s engage surface-to-air defenses while F-15s perform a coordinated fighter sweep over the target is not possible. Situations pitting two F-15s against four inbound MiG-29s, excel with technical and tactical accuracy. **B-** (Tom "KC" Basham)

### TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** Avalon Hill  
**DESIGNER:** Big Time Software  
**SYSTEM:** Windows  
**THEME:** Air Warfare  
**HD SPACE:** 10 MB  
**PLAYERS:** 1 or 2 on-line  
**LEVELS:** N/A

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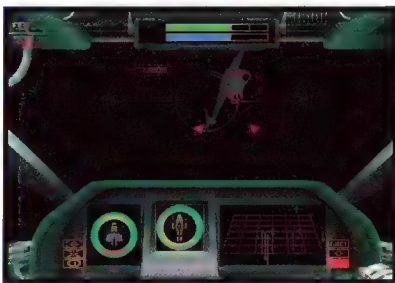
# REBELLION IN SPACE

## Join the *Renegade* Fighter Fleet

After generations of expansion into the galaxy, a lethal mutation of the common cold virus annihilates 80 percent of the human race. Humanity, in its weakened state, is ripe for the depredations of the reptilian SSora and the centauroid KessRith. Only a great military leader could rally the human race to throw off the yoke of alien oppression.

Alexander Trajan, retired militia leader, organized military re-enactor and theatrical martial drill teams on all the enslaved human worlds. When the aliens had been lulled by this seemingly innocuous pageantry, Trajan launched a simultaneous and coordinated attack. Through guile and misdirection, the KessRith and SSora were soon actively at each other's throats and a new human empire emerged.

Sadly, like many revolutionary leaders of the past, Trajan made himself emperor and founded a quasi-fascist meritocracy modeled on the Imperial Rome of ancient times. The new Plebeians, those who couldn't or wouldn't take up arms, were little more than serfs. Citizenship could only be attained through military service, causing the forces of New Rome to grow to a ridiculous size.



As the politically powerful became more entrenched, the second Caesar declared the formation of a new class of citizen, the Overlords. These select individuals would have unlimited power when acting in Caesar's name and in the operation of the Terran Overlord Government.

In the year 6681, the commander of the Imperial Army and an admiral of the Imperial Navy rejected the sweeping powers of the TOG. The Renegades took flight in almost 4,000 battleship groups and made for the relatively peaceful Orion Arm of this galaxy.

The very existence of humans living outside the TOG's thrall is intolerable to the Overlords. The Renegades must yield ... or die!

Thus begins the story of **Renegade: Battle for Jacob's Star**, SSI's adaptation of FASA's *Renegade Legion: Interceptor* board game.



The player is cast as a military misfit (sounds familiar) banished from the high-profile strategic battles where recognition and promotion are found to a backwater listening post in the Jacob's Star salient.

Thought to be a safe dumping-ground for losers, Post Alpha becomes the front-line when the TOG renews its offensive against the Renegades. After the commander of the fighter wing at Post Alpha is killed in action during the first campaign, the player's character is advanced to command rank. Repulsing the TOG will bring fame and adulation; lose Jacob's Star and it's death or ignominy or both.

When starting a new game there is wide latitude in how it will play. Besides being able to adjust the sound and turn various features on and off; the relative armor thickness, shield strength, weapon power, range and recharge rates, computer piloting and gunnery skills, fighter speed and turning rate are all adjustable. By altering the skill levels of the TOG fighter pilots and the power of the player's craft, **Renegade** should challenge the player long after completion of the seven campaigns.

Comparison with **Wing Commander III** is inescapable: **Renegade** is a better space-fighter simulation than **WC3**. It has clearer, smoother graphics, which is probably the most important feature on games of this type. The enemy fighters seem to be actually maneuvering to avoid damage and destroy the Renegade

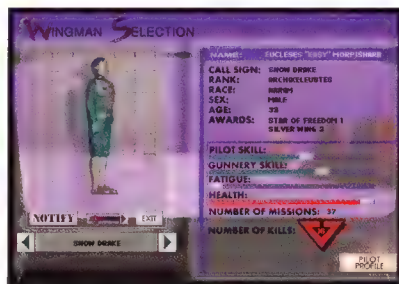
fighters. Renegade wingmen are very good at eliminating TOG fighters and are quite necessary on most missions. The pseudo three-dimensional cockpit radar gives a much clearer picture of the overall battle situation than the two-dimensional radar found in **WC3**.

**Renegade** also has a music-CD player built in. After tiring of the stock background music (this happens fairly quickly) the player can pop in any music CD when the game has completed loading and it becomes the new background music. The game pauses and displays a prompt when the data-disc is needed.

**Renegade** lacks the rich plot and narrative of **WC3**. It has few cinematic segments. The player is briefed on the upcoming mission, shown a solar system map and told about the TOG's advances and retreats. Pick out a ship, choose the best available wingmen and fly the mission. There is no character development, no plot line nor mysteries.

There is no voluntary save; if the character dies, it is recorded as such. (A line editor and some ingenuity can, when applied to a character's .PLR file, resurrect the dead.) **Renegade** also sorely lacks a "Keep Radio Silence" command to hush the flow of repetitive inanities from the wingmen.

Even with the Monster (60 Megs) on the hard drive each mission takes a long time to load. Expect to wait four or five minutes before being put in the cockpit when using a double-speed CD-ROM, still longer with a single-speed CD-ROM.



Whether flying alone or leading a full squadron, **Renegade** is a pure fighter pilot's game. **Renegade: Battle for Jacob's Star** doesn't have a lot of things other space-fighter sims have: distractions. **B+** (David T. Harris)

### TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** SSI  
**DESIGNER:** Midnight Software  
**SYSTEM:** PC CD-ROM  
**THEME:** Space Fighter Sim  
**HD SPACE:** 15-60 MB  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**LEVELS:** 7 campaigns

# Rather be Golfing?

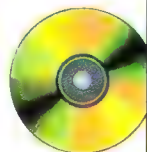


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# REVIEWS

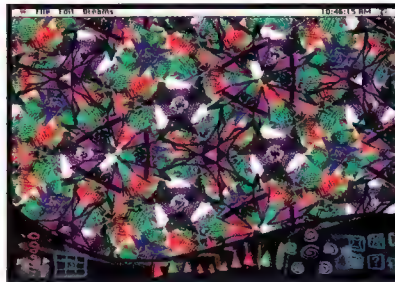
The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of a variety of entertainment software reviewers from around the country. Their critical appraisals of the latest software releases are presented here.

	Andy Katz EDITOR	Mark Cannon SENIOR EDITOR	Bill Kunkel EXECUTIVE EDITOR	Steven L. Kent L.A. TIMES
Aces of the Deep	B+	B+	B+	B+
Air Havoc Control	B-	C	B-	-
Alone in the Dark II	A	A	A+	C
Armored Fist	A	B+	A	B-
Blake Stone	C	D	-	C
Commander Blood	C-	F	D	-
Club Dead	B+	B	B-	-
Colonization	A-	A	A	A+
Creature Shock	B	B	B-	B
Cyberia	A-	A-	B	B+
Dark Sun II	B	B	B	-
Descent	A-	B+	A	A+
Doom II	A-	A-	A	B+
Dragon Lore	B	B	-	-
Flash Traffic	F	F	F	F
Global Domination	B	B	A	-
Hammer of the Gods	B	B	B	-
Hell	B-	B	C+	-
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	C+
Indy Car Racing	A	B+	B+	A
Master of Magic	-	B-	A	A
Menzoberranzan	B-	C+	B-	-
Metaltech: Earthsiege	B+	-	B+	C-
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Operation Crusader	B+	B	B-	-
Operation Europe	B-	C	-	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	B
Power Poker	C+	C-	B	B
Relentless: Twinson	B	C	-	B
SimTower	B+	A-	B-	B+
Slam City	B+	B-	A	B+
Star Reach	B	B	B	B+
Superhero League Mb	B	B	B	-
Theme Park	A-	A-	C+	D+
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-
Zephyr	-	C	C-	B



Origin continues its tradition of great flight action games with *Pacific Strike*.

**The Groove Thing** (*Big Top/Mac CD*) Not really a game, but definitely a toy. This "visual jam" lets computerists control a kaleidoscopic display of shapes and colors, accompanied by three different soundtracks. Via a control panel, Groovers can change line weight, tile size, symmetry and color pallet of nine different styles of abstract visual display. Available music styles are High Pulse (generic Techno), Zen Riffs (fairly interesting) and Nature (ambient nature sounds). Each music style has a set of keyboard commands that activate sound effects, etc. Players can also input their own music. There's a lot of hyperbolic mumbo jumbo on the box and in the



docs, but if you don't go into it actually expecting a "rocket fire infinite drop through nirvana/sexuctive meditation" you won't be disappointed. **Sarah's Geometric Dreams**, an accompanying shareware After Dark screen saver module, is cool as well. **B+** (*John W. Hardin*)

**Jigsaw-It!** (*Dynaware/PC CD-ROM, Mac CD*) Glowing colors, ease of use and elimination of the kitten factor make jigsaws on screen the choice of many puzzle hounds. This is better than average, with a well-designed interface and over 100 pictures to cut to four kinds of shaped pieces. (There's no way to mix shapes in a puzzle, so the pieces are annoyingly uniform.) A kid setting is included. The Puzzle Maker imports photos or drawings, and a Gift Maker puts puzzles on disk that can be played even without the program. **B+** (*Joyce Worley*)

**Big Top's Cartoon Toolbox Starring Felix the Cat** (*Big Top/Mac CD*) Our friend Felix has been around a while and seen some changes since the days of Pat Sullivan and Max Fleischer. Today he's gone digital and leads a Saturday morning cartoon repertory group including Poindexter, the Professor, Rock Bottom, Vavoom and Master Cylinder. The idea, however, is that the user gets to make the cartoon. Provided are backgrounds and props, a variety of musical background themes, visual effects and scads of classic cartoon sound effects. Each character has many brief animations

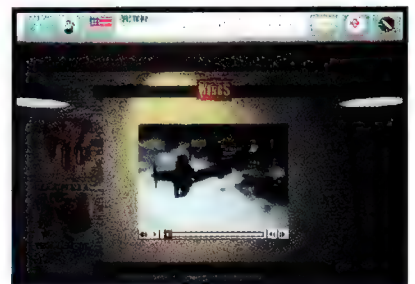
that can be linked together and dragged to make them go where the user wants them to. It takes work, maybe more than



a small child can handle, but the results (which can be saved to a stand-alone file and even to Windows if desired) can be fun. **B+** (*Ross Chamberlain*)

**The Big Three** (*Alliance Interactive/Windows CD-ROM*) This latest from Alliance is an extremely simplistic point-and-click representation of WWII. **The Big Three** features several preset scenarios and campaigns, all at the grand strategic level. Combat is resolved with a single six-sided die, and players will not need to memorize any complex supply or movement rules. **The Big Three** is more like Risk than a serious wargame, but it lacks all of the inherent fun of diplomacy that title readily enjoys. Small technical glitches were also noted. **C** (*Ed Dille*)

**Wings Over Europe** (*The Discovery Channel/Mac and Windows CD-ROM*) With **Wings Over Europe**, the Discovery Channel finally throws its hat into the ever-expanding multimedia ring. An interactive database, similar to Spectrum HoloByte's **Wings of Glory** series, **Wings Over Europe** uses sound bytes, short movies, text narratives and still images to describe various World War



II-era warplanes. A "test your knowledge" section quizzes players on their World War II aviation knowledge. Should players score poorly on the quizzes, the helpful digitized host points them to the source of correct answers. The Windows CD-ROM also includes a fully playable demonstration of Dynamix's **Aces Over Europe**. **B** (*Tom Basham*)

**Simon the Sorcerer** (Activision/PC CD) Simon is a teenager who, while rummaging in his attic, gets sucked into a magic world. He must become a wizard himself to foil a villain named Sordid. This puzzle/adventure game has been



Ysanne Andropath, a woman with a gun, an attitude and a hatred for the male species that borders on the pathological. The player has the option of selecting to play Jack who must escape Ysanne, or Ysanne, whose job is to hunt Jack down. Two different sets of puzzles make this really two different games for the price of one. This is a cute idea, and although the game makes no big breakthroughs, it is a good puzzle solver that Psynopsis has no need to feel guilty **B** (John P. Withers)

**Warren Miller's Ski World** (Multicom/PC CD) First things first: This is not a skiing simulation; it is, instead, a combination database/tutorial aimed at users who already ski or are just getting into the sport. There's a Resort dbase, complete with trail maps; a video index of 25 clips from Miller's Extreme Skiing films, with an option for users to create their own video from the FMV footage;



skiing history and trivia. Users can also study the fine points of snow squashing via an instructional video. Given its excellent production values, **Ski World** should make a nice addition to a skiing enthusiast's hard drive. **B** (Bill Kunkel)

**NBA Live '95** (Electronic Arts/PC CD) EA Sports' **NBA Live** video game was as important to the category of



electronic roundball as **John Madden Football** was to grid sims or the **NHL** line has been to hockey. In other words, it's revolutionary, groundbreaking and totally revises the way we expect to perceive basketball in electronic terms. The original video game's unique POV, spectacular graphics and play action have been wedded to a flock of special features as **NBA Live** arrives in PC format. Put succinctly, this game rules the silicon parquet. **B** (Bill Kunkel)

around a little while; now it arrives on CD, and solving the puzzles is just as unlikely as before. Billed as Pythonesque, the humor is indeed quite British, often quite silly and a lot of fun when the player isn't being frustrated by the maddening inability to figure out what to do next. The publisher released a hint book a couple of years ago; seek it out if thoud'st play the game through. **B-** (Ross Chamberlain)

**Guilty** (Psynopsis/PC CD) The incorrigible Jack T. Ladd—thief, tax dodger and escaped con—finds himself in the clutches of Federation Policewoman

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# EARTHWORMS TO GO

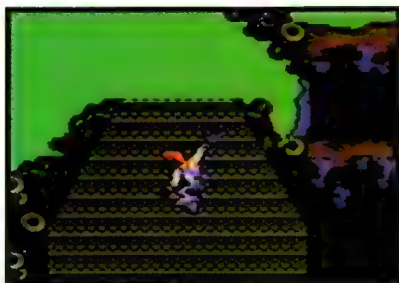
## Earthworm Jim for the Game Gear

Scene: High above the Earth in space, a battle rages. Far below on the ground, a battle rages. In space, a hero is vanquished and his mighty armor falls to the ground. On the ground, a wily earthworm eludes a preda-cious crow, only to be crushed by the hero's falling armor.



Through sheer wormy luck, the ultra high-tech, indestructible, super space cybersuit doesn't take our slimy hero's life. In a turn totally unanticipated by the suit's designers, the ultra high-tech space particles of the suit react in a new, synergistic way, transmogrifying Earthworm Jim to a super Lumbricus terrestris, complete with plasma blaster.

Unfortunately for the little worm, he gains a much more malign feathered foe: Psy-Crow. Psy-Crow is an alien avian on a mission from the evil Queen Pulsating, Bloated, Festering, Sweaty,



Pus-filled, Malformed, Slug-for-a-Butt. (We do not take responsibility for names given any characters.) He is to retrieve the stolen supersuit at all costs. The Queen knows that the suit will make her even more beautiful than her sister, Princess-What's-Her-Name. Jim overhears and decides he needs to meet this princess before Psy-Crow can find him and the suit.

As if Jim didn't have enough worries, there's a whole crew of bad guys con-ning to open the canned worm and take his cybersuit. There's Major

Mucus, Peter Puppy and Bob the Goldfish (and #4, his mindless hench-cat). They each lust after the suit to use it to gain supergalactic dominance.

Jim starts out in New Junk City, a twisted garbagescape guarded by junkyard owner Chuck and his faithful attack dog Fifi.

What the Heck? is Level Two. Evil the Cat rules Planet Heck. His is a hellish domain filled with corporate lawyers and elevator music. Level Three is Down the Tubes. Here's where Bob and #4 lurk, waiting to get Jim's suit. Jim must fight the drone kitten guards to leave this underwater lair.

Snot a Problem breaks from the side-scrolling levels and pits Jim in a bungee-jumping contest over a pool of mucous, where the goal is to knock the enemy (Major Mucus) into the walls. Just to keep Jim from concentrating too hard on avoiding the walls, Mucus Phlegm Brain awaits at the bottom of the pool of snot, hoping Jim gets within good striking distance to snatch.

Level Five is Andy Asteroids. Here the player takes a behind-the-worm view as Jim barrels down a tunnel, hotly pursued by Psy-Crow. Jim must dodge asteroids and knock the Crow off his rocket backpack.

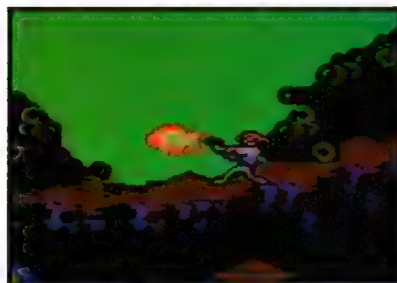
For Pete's Sake is Level Six. Petey the dog is constantly mutating into a ravenous beast, which makes him an unpleasant pet. Jim must console the distraught animal (read: avoid getting eaten by) while avoiding the meteor showers and flying saucers.

Level Seven is Buttville. This is the home stomping grounds of Queen Pulsating, etc. Here, Jim will face the Queen and her minions. Everywhere Jim turns, one of her flunkies is there, ready to make diced worm.

There are pick-up items that make a Superworm's life easier. The Plasma Power icon equips Jim's plasma gun with 250 rounds. The Mega Plasma power-up is a one-shot that wipes out anything it hits. The Suit Power icon supplies the vital atomic energy that the suit needs to function. Super Suit Power completely recharges Jim's suit.

Asteroid shields are useful during the racing sequences; they protect Jim from colliding with asteroids. The Atomic Accelerator gives Jim's sled a quick burst of speed. Fuel Pods add fuel to the Racing sled, and the Extra Life is self-explanatory.

It's surprising how big the levels are. It's a testament to the Playmates team that the levels seem so large and completely non-linear. The player never feels herded to any point in the side-scrolling arenas. In fact, this is a little too successful, as it is easy to get lost and wander around the large levels.



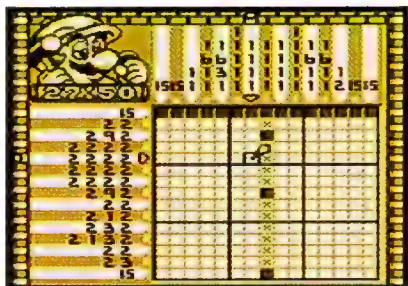
Jim tries awfully hard to be funny, and mostly succeeds, though the worst jokes are as broad and flat as Kansas. There's much gratuitous mucous, heartily salted with snot and phlegm. There's even the occasional sidelong reference to vomit. There are many animations for each character. Fifi the junkyard dog is especially good. The sound is nothing to write home about but is not terrible.

Earthworm Jim is a suitable substitute for players who've not seen the game on any other platform. It's a fun respite, but not the portable game of the decade or anything like that. Players who don't expect too much won't be disappointed. (+) (John W. Hardin)

### TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** Gametek  
**SYSTEM:** Game Gear  
**THEME:** Action  
**MEGABITS:** 4  
**PLAYERS:** 1  
**LEVELS:** 7

**Mario's Picross** (Nintendo/Game Boy) With over 250 conundrums to solve, puzzle fans will surely want to check out the latest brain buster from the Big N. Vertical and horizontal numeric clues hint at how many squares to scrape away in order to reveal the hidden picture. Easy Picross offers 5x5 and 10x10 square puzzles; while Picross contains two courses—Kinoko and Star—featuring 64 15x15 grids.



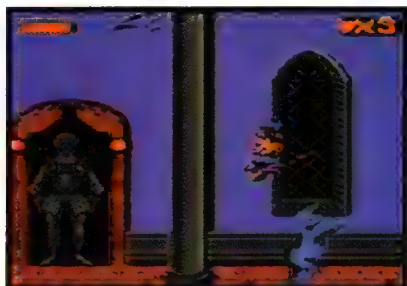
Picross' game field, however, even for a Game Boy, is ludicrously small, and playing it via the Super Game Boy adapter doesn't help. The music is inane and will quickly exceed most players' annoyance levels. Picross is entertaining, but its flaws keep it from reaching the heights expected from Nintendo. **B-** (Laurie Yates)

**Legend of Illusion starring Mickey Mouse** (Sega/Game Gear) M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E is F-U-N. That heroic rodent returns in Legend of Illusion. As temporary monarch, filling in for the cowardly King Pete, Mickey is stuck with the task of traversing five magical lands including The Crystal Forest, Sunken Ruins and the Rainbow Wastelands, in order to rescue the Tree of Life. Along the way, he meets Donald Duck and Goofy, ponders puzzles and



resolves riddles, but his primary mission is the rescue of the Tree, for if he fails, the magical Kingdom will meet a fate worse than EuroDisney. Enchanting fun for all ages. **A-** (LaShunda Davis)

**Bonkers Wax Up** (Sega Club/Game Gear) Disney animators maintain Bonkers' animated appeal in his first portable platform appearance. Bonkers becomes embroiled in Madame



Who-Said's plot to capture Toons, wax 'em, and display them in her ancient Wax Museum when she captures his pal, Lucky Piquel. Fortunately, Lucky left a trail of breadcrumbs—er, pickles—for his rescuer to follow. Regrettably, the pickle trail went terribly sour, so Bonkers must locate the wayward pickles with relish, lest Lucky contracts a fatal case of waxy buildup. While the graphics, music and sound

effects are designed to appeal to the younger gaming set, adults will find Wax Up a pleasant game, as Disney once again works its wonderful magic. **B+** (Laurie Yates)

**Elite Soccer** (Gametek, Game Boy) This is a complete, fast-moving soccer sim. Players can compete as or against one of 35 teams from around the world. There are three modes of play; Knock Out is a one-off exhibition game among any two teams. League play lets the player set up a tournament between two to eight teams. World Cup simulates the most-watched sporting event on the planet. Portable footy fans can simulate games between other teams, and play in matches involving their team. The player can edit squads and formations, toggle the sound on and off and alter the control setup.

Some of the non-player controlled characters flicker really badly at the beginning of rounds, and when things get moving too fast it is very difficult to follow the ball, which actually seems in proportion to the players. Elite Soccer is not an arcade game; fouls and injuries are fully accounted for. On the whole, Elite Soccer is actually pretty good, but any soccer game on the market is hard pressed to beat FIFA Soccer. Elite Soccer doesn't dethrone that EA title. **B-** (John W. Hardin)



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**A Passion For Art re-creates a historic gallery with a virtual tour**

## TECH SPECS

**PUBLISHER:** Corbis Publishing  
**DESIGNER:** Curtis Wong  
**SYSTEM:** PC (CD-ROM)  
**THEME:** Fine Art  
**HD SPACE:** 8 MB RAM  
**PLAYERS:** 1

In 1925, Dr. Albert Barnes opened the Barnes Foundation Museum. But critics were less than kind; they called the post-impressionist paintings bizarre and obscene.

Dr. Barnes responded with characteristic independence. Furious at the critics, he closed the museum, hiding from the world his magnificent collection of paintings. Since that time, only a few students and friends have been permitted inside.

The loss to art lovers was profound. Hundreds of masterpieces were veiled from view. The wonderful museum has remained closed for over 70 years.

**A Passion for Art** opens those long-sealed doors and takes us inside. What a trip it is! The two floors and 23 rooms are open to the computing public, in a virtual museum visit.

The dramatic story of the museum's past is narrated, with accompanying news clips, before the tour begins. Commentary is provided by some of the most noted art curators of our time, all enthusiastic about the historic event this CD represents.



And, this is an important event. It signals a new era of art appreciation, when armchair tours will explore the wonders of the world's great museums.

The Barnes collection is imposing; there are over 350 paintings, including dozens by Matisse, Cezanne, Renoir,

Picasso ... The index of paintings reads like a Who's Who of the post-impressionistic art world.

The interface to tour this virtual museum is the slickest, most intuitive ever used on encyclopedia programs. A row of buttons down the left side of the screen guide the trip. Tours are narrated by top authorities in the art world. Gallery provides a freeform stroll through the rooms at the user's own pace. Paintings presents all the works by a particular artist.

Timeline graphically illustrates the artists' works and other events, so the user can understand how it integrates into world history. The Slide Show function lets the computerist put together a set of favorite paintings to view in

wall produces a full-screen view. (Grey paintings are, alas, only wallpaper, and can't be seen. This is the only flaw in an otherwise ideal program.)

Even exploring the index is fun; moving the cursor down the list of paintings produces postage stamp-sized, full-color pictures. Then a click blows the painting to full size, ready for examination, with all its back-up information available.



This is an all-family program. It's easy enough for any child, yet the depth of information will keep older computerists coming back again and again, to study the paintings and the artists who created them.

The Barnes Foundation is an awesome collection of art. The stupidity that caused it to be locked away stole



sequence or in an endless loop. Index lists all the paintings. Archives contains documents about the museum's acquisitions, with receipts, canceled checks and correspondence that bring to life the process of founding a great museum.

A zoom feature lets art lovers examine detail. Clickables lead to biographies, portfolios or facts about the specific painting. A map shows which room the viewer is in, and a click on any other room transports the point of view.

A click on a color painting on the

something very precious. **A Passion for Art** gives it back in a wonderful, attainable, affordable format. The art belongs to the world, and it has finally reached the audience it deserves.

This program should be in the collection of every family. This is the kind of quality experience that makes home computers worthwhile.

Perfect may seem an unusual word when dealing with computer software, but this comes as close as any program to date. **A+** (Joyce Worley)



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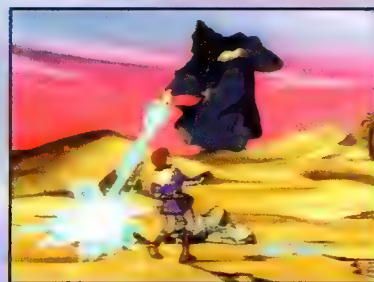
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It might seem to anyone plugged into the computer revolution that the entire educational process is about to be turned over to electronic tutors. In fact, teachers are a long way from being obsoleted, even in schools with fat budgets. Most educators are agreed, however, that computer-aided education is an effective teaching method that holds much hope.

Unfortunately, there simply is not enough equipment available for it to be a major factor for most kids.

Although the majority of schools have multimedia technology available, most of it is used in administrative support services. For example, 85 percent of K-12 librarians have multimedia available. But only 59 percent of teachers have multimedia capability in the classroom.

The gap between the haves and have-nots is wide when it comes to on-line services. Almost half of the librarians have networked computers and Internet connections. By way of contrast, only 29 percent of classroom teachers have networked computers, and less than 20 percent have Internet access.

It is widely believed, and tests seem to bear out, that the information superhighway will be a great electronic tutor and motivator for students. Yet reality lags far behind the dream, in part because the funds just aren't available.

The electronic industry continues to provide contributions of equipment, supplies, training and money to educational facilities. Hardware giveaways have helped many schools, but even the most generous corporations can't answer the entire monetary need.

Other companies are sponsoring research programs. For example, Electronic Book Technologies started the Educational Grant Program, with the charter to research publishing digital libraries on the Internet. The first grant went to University of California at Berkeley, to investigate methods for electronically publishing text, photos, maps and music of various scholarly works. EBT is also providing software and on-line publishing tools, so scholars can browse the Net and use an image viewer to see pictures from the original source or text, which formerly were unavailable except by traveling to its location.

It's a new world building, albeit rather slowly. (Joyce Worley)

**JFK Assassination** (By *Medio* for Mac CD; Ages 12-Adult) This brings together facts about the Kennedy murder with backgrounders on everyone involved in the bitter drama. QuickTime movies shot by spectators, animations that examine the scene (and the bullet route) from every angle, testimony and massive amounts of data compiled since that date explore the theories, conspiracies and possibilities. It also includes the reports and conclusions of other investigations. Hot spots link the threads to form an involving exploration for anyone who's trying to find an answer to one of our society's saddest mysteries. **A** (Joyce Worley)

**The Oregon Trail II** (By *MECC* for PC CD and Mac CD; Ages 8-14) The greatest of the American migrations is revisited in the latest rev of a classic learning game. It now has lots more player choices, improved interactivity and some additional frills. Even the on-line data banks are deeper, and more attractively presented. Variations make it replayable, and the learning content is enhanced by the outstanding educational movie packed with the CD. Needs lots of memory to run properly, and it's a bear to install, but there's no better way to learn about the great trails that led to Oregon, California and Salt Lake City. **B+** (Joyce Worley)

**Write with Me** (*Word Perfect*/Windows CD; Ages: 4-10) This activity-based program introduces youngsters to early



word-processing skills and concepts. In addition to wp basics—cut, paste, save, scroll, fonts, etc.—children learn letter, word and space recognition, how words and sentences sound when read aloud, print direction and punctuation symbols. Children can create an ABC Book, Me! By Me! Book (an autobiography template) or work with Sign Studio, Card Maker, Things to Do (a selection of templates from letters to book reports) and a free-format word processor. Other features include a setup menu for parents and a lock-out mode for parental files. **A-** (Laurie Yates)

**The Animals! 2.0** (*Mindscape*/Mac CD; Ages 5-Adult) A zoo excursion is always

popular with children, and Mindscape has revamped its popular San Diego Zoo-based package to reflect the changes that venerable institution is undertaking. The bioclimatic zones introduce children to the importance of ecological balance among flora, fauna and humans. There are also tours of different areas, a nursery of baby animals, peeks at the behind-the-scenes activities of the zoo and much more. Graphics and sound effects are well rendered, generating the best-ever virtual visit to a state-of-the-art zoo. While there is no traditional educational reinforcement, **The Animals! 2.0** is a good investment for anyone. **B+** (Laurie Yates)

**The Civil War** (*Aims/Philips CD-i*; Ages Jr High-Adult) The American Civil War goes interactive. **TCW** is a two-disc product with questions and text for students to ponder, supplemented by 18 video segments. Many of these clips, however, are shockingly inappropriate, especially those taken from D. W. Griffith's racist silent film *Birth of a Nation*, while others are simply ludicrous. The bland, documentary-style presentation is a better cure for insomnia than C-Span. The reinforcement quizzes pose 20 questions. If the response is incorrect, the program replays a video segment as a form of edu-punishment. The topper: The title of one disc actually misspells "Secedes." On this product, *Aims* definitely misses. **D-** (Laurie Yates)

**Rand McNally's Children's Atlas of World Wildlife** (*Gametek/Hybrid CD*; Ages 5-Adult) This multimedia product allows children to check out animals in their natural habitats. The narration includes the complete text of *Rand McNally's Atlas of World Wildlife*, accompanied by over 60 video clips, 200 photos and 30 sounds. Graphics and sound are first-rate, complementing the textual data. Games range from basic animal identification to analysis via habitat. Children can assemble jigsaw puzzles, participate in a matching card game and identify animal habitats on a map.



**CAWW** addresses several current educational concerns (geographic and animal ignorance) in a highly entertaining package. **B+** (Laurie Yates)

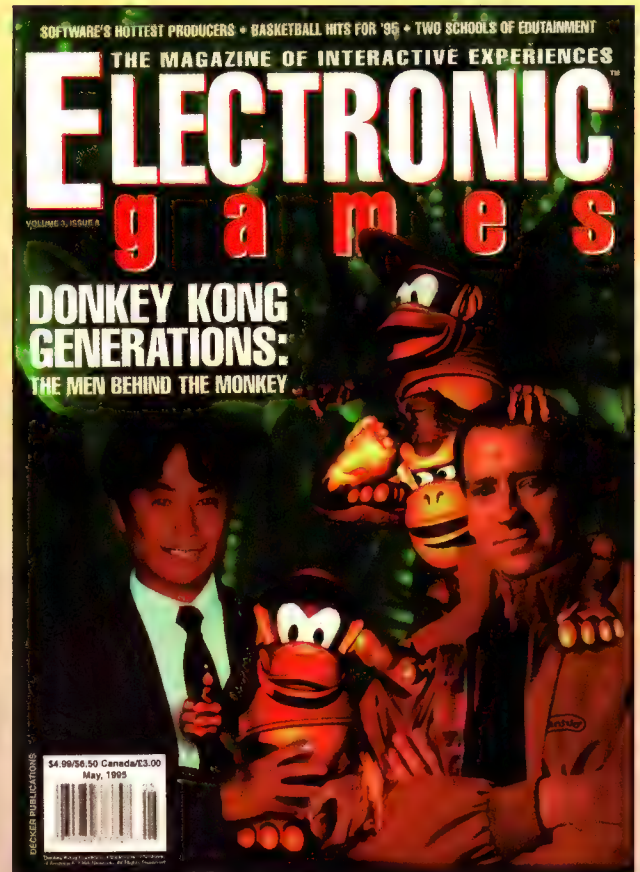
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# HEIMLICH MANEUVER

## All But the Portable Kitchen Sink

A few months back at the Las Vegas CES show I ran across a booth that I hadn't planned to stop at. The booth just happened to be in an out-of-the-way place that I passed on my way somewhere else. The display was from Franklin Electronic Publishers. You know these guys. They're the ones who put out all those little calculator-sized electronic dictionaries and English-to-whatever "language masters."

The main portion of their floor area was taken up by an interesting product line they call the Bookman. Bookman is a lot like their other products—similar display, a full (but very small) keyboard—but with a twist. If you buy one of Franklin's older dictionaries, what you get is a dictionary. The Bookman accepts cartridges, and the booth display already showed off a few dozen titles that are in the works. Each Bookman also comes configured for a specific book. For instance, all the available titles are sold either in cartridge form or in already loaded Bookman form. So, you can get either the Baseball Encyclopedia Bookman or just its cartridge to add to say, the Parent's Emergency Medical Guide Bookman.

Their library of titles and the technology behind the Bookman is actually very impressive. People will often question how,

say, the Bookman Movie Views product can compete against Microsoft's **Cinemania**. The key point here is portability. You can't take **Cinemania** to Blockbuster with you.

However, I'm not sure how many people will be interested in such a product line as it is. Franklin seems to have the right idea but I'm just not sure they have the right implementation. One of their problems is display space. The Bookman basically is limited to 3-5 lines of text on the screen at one time. They're still moving forward with the technology and have great ideas for the future.

The computer industry has its own form of this technology in the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) but they're not getting anywhere fast either. The most popular portables I'm aware of are those in our own industry. Nintendo, Sega and Atari have sold more of their portable game machines than all PDAs combined. If Sega goes forward with the Venus, which is supposed to be a fully portable Genesis, then I'm sure they'll be far more popular.

So I started wondering why we couldn't meld the thinking behind Bookman with a Sega Game Gear, for example. Nintendo tried to sell a few non-gaming titles for the Game Boy and failed, but I'll bet that had more to do with the Game Boy's lack of a keyboard interface than anything else. No

one likes alphabet pointing schemes.

Why couldn't we get a Game Gear that had a small keyboard interface like the Bookman? The Bookman would benefit greatly from the larger full-color display, and the Game Gear would benefit from the improved interface and potential library of new educational and productive cartridges. Surely a system like this could be produced and still remain attractively priced. I see no reason why they couldn't have these selling on the street for under \$150. A few people have asked me why kids would care about such a system but I think they are missing the whole point.

I've consulted with hundreds of parents who are always overly concerned about their kids playing games on the \$3,000 computer they plan to buy. I always tell them the same thing: Don't sweat it. Let 'em play all the games they want. Invariably a few months after they get started they begin to feel more comfortable with the computer and start to realize the other possibilities, like more polished term papers, etc.

The same thing could be true for this new type of portable device. So, what if you got it for your kids for Christmas because they wanted to play games in the car? Sooner or later they'll realize that they can benefit from some of the other selections out there. And, now it could be much more of a family device. You and I could use it to balance our checkbooks, search for specific movies or look up a favorite recipe. I might even have to keep one in the bathroom to replace the near-library amount of printed material we keep in there.

Imagine what can also become of this same device as cellular and satellite technologies mature. You'll also be able to use it to get up-to-the-minute news, sports scores, stock quotes and more. With the way Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are advancing, you'd also be able to take it with you in the car and never get lost again.

Heck, we might even sneak away from the kids and play the latest Sonic incarnation, but I won't tell anyone if you won't.

.....  
by Rich Heimlich

Rich Heimlich is a bi-pedal carbon and water-based life form

## Heimlich's Honor Roll

This month is a really strong month for sequels. **X-COM: Terror From the Deep** is out and I couldn't be more pleased. It's even more enjoyable than the original **X-COM** and is rather solid for a 1.0 version. It's sure to suck the life out of you.

Activision seems to be back in full swing these days. **Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure** for Sega CD is possibly the best title on that system. The sound alone is almost worth the price. I can't wait to see the 32X version.

Also from Activision is a sequel I've

waited some time for, **Shanghai: Great Moments** for PC-CD. If you are into strategy games, this is one that's bound to please you.

Sega recently released a slew of games from the sports group. Among them is the sequel to their Wimbledon tennis game, **ATP Tour Championship Tennis**. It's a strong, two-player tennis game, and one of the first that isn't a breeze in One-player Mode. They even let you tune the speed of the computer to match your level of play. It's about time someone thought of that feature.

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# THE KUNKEL REPORT

## THE PERFECT GAME

**O**ddly enough, no one had ever asked me the question before. "Did you hear me?" they said. "Has anybody ever created the perfect electronic game?"

Knee-jerk logic demanded a stern, "Of course not!" but from the first instant, I had a candidate in my mind.

"There have been quite a few great games," I began. "Revolutionary games. Brilliant games. But perfect? **Pong**, for all its simple brilliance, offered insufficient variation and fell quickly out of favor when faced with higher-tech competition. **Zork** is, at its heart, a word-guessing game, while **Space Invaders** and **Pac-Man** both fall prey to patterns, and patterns kill spontaneity. The **Toejam & Earl** and **Lemmings** games both have loyal cult followings, but they don't possess the universal gestalt required for perfection. **Street Fighter II** and its countless imitators compel the users to spend hours mastering trick moves."

"So there is no perfect game?"

Once again, I considered my candidate. "There is *one* game," I offered, "but I'm not certain it meets all the qualifications."

"Well spit it out," came the response.

"They've got to get the *EG* logo on this page, you know."

"Okay, I think there may be one perfect electronic game after all. **Tetris**."

"**Tetris**?! Perfect?" my muse sputtered, after a pause of astonishment. "With *those* graphics? You've got to be kidding."

"No," I decided, "I'm not kidding. In fact, the simple graphics are part of its perfection; they work just as well on a Game Boy as they will on an Ultra 64. **Tetris** is also equally successful as a computer and video game; it is an almost hypnotic delight when played solitaire, and a true competitive challenge when contested with other humans.

"Then consider its essence; **Tetris** could not exist in any other format but an electronic one. It could not be played as a mechanical game; it could not be played on a board, or through the use of dice and probabilities. It functions only within the context of electronic gaming.

"**Tetris** offers not only a joyous interpretation of mathematics, but actually seems to fulfill some basic human need."

"Dude," I was informed. "You've been Tetrisized."

"You're right," I admitted. "When the Game Boy first came out, I played the game

*everywhere*. I began to *dream* about it. I would see these massive New York City construction sites, with beams being slotted into place, and I realized they were simply another form of Tetrisia."

"**Tetrisia**?! Man, I was tracking you there for a while, but you are over the edge now. And what's this about **Tetris** fulfilling a 'basic human need?' What's that bushwah, Brother Kunkel?"

"It's *not* bushwah!" I insisted. "It's true—there is something about us as a species that finds a contentment, a satisfaction in making things fit together. That's why people do jigsaw puzzles; we love to neatly fill in spaces.

"But what ultimately makes **Tetris** so perfect is the fact that it is so humble; its minimalist appearance defines its idealized simplicity. People even reveal things about themselves by the way they play," I declared. "It's sort of like handwriting analysis. For example, some people compulsively fill up every level, while others build great structures that await the arrival of a single piece to complete them."

"Could be," my muse decided. "I mean, I like the game myself, and a lot of what you say actually makes a minimal amount of sense. But what if you're wrong? What if it's **Klax** they're playing in 20 years?"

I smiled understandingly. "Man, they aren't playing **Klax** today. And it's an excellent game. But when your option is a good game or a perfect game. ... Well, let's just say that that's why people still play **Pac-Man** but you don't find a lot of **Pepper IIs** filling arcade floorspace."

My muse seemed uncertain. "It is a good game, I wouldn't deny that, but perfect?"

"It wins by default because it has no flaws. There is nothing wrong with the game. It is infinitely replayable. It is impossible to 'conquer,' unlike these pumped-up platform games with their cliched collection of three dozen steroid-jacking, progressively mightier bosses to keep the players coming back until they ultimately discover the boss' Achilles' heel—or pick up the strategy from a book or magazine.

"**Tetris**, on the other hand, *is* perfect. It is the idealized incarnation of geometric perfection overlaid with a dynamic process that produces true closure. There will always be **Tetris**; it rules."

My muse just shrugged.

by Bill Kunkel

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JUNE, 1995

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 9

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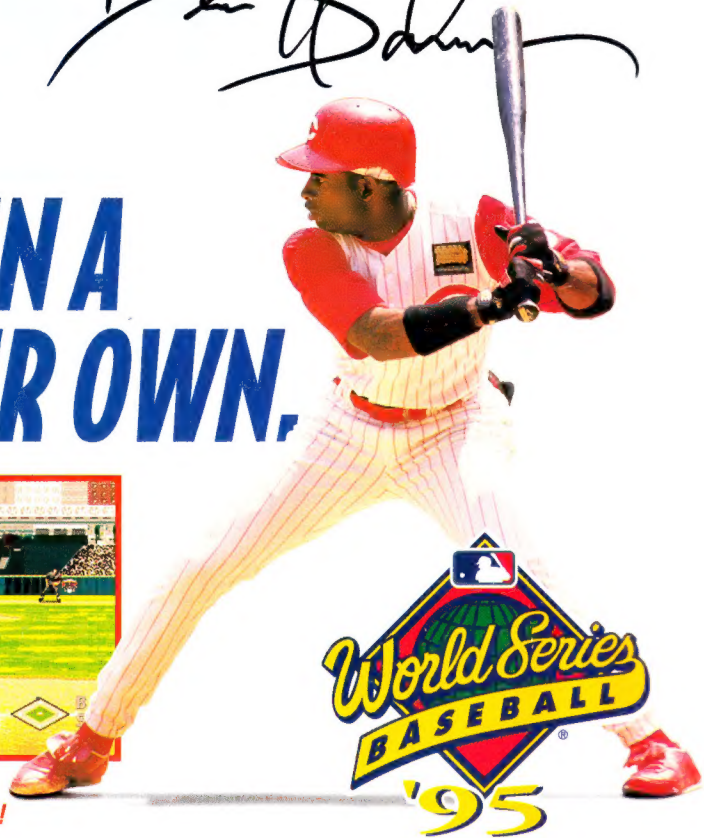
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