

Special All-Time Favorites Issue!

First look! Wing Commander III!



Doom



IndyCar Racing



X-Wing



Civilization



Sam & Max



SimCity 2000

PC

GAMER

ON THE DISK!

Detroit



Hours and hours of creative gameplay from Impressions' new business sim

The World's Finest PC and CD-ROM Games Magazine

What's Old:

Which old favorites have stood the test of time?

What's New:

The hot new games that have stormed to the top

What's Next:

Our predictions for next year's Top 40

TOP 40

Games of All Time

Vol.1 No.3
August 1994
Only \$7.95
with HD Disk

\$7.95 U.S. & Canada



The definitive listing starts on page 32



STAR CRUSADER.



SURE YOU COULD DIE, BUT THAT'S LIFE.

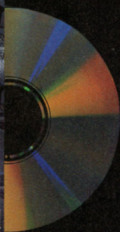
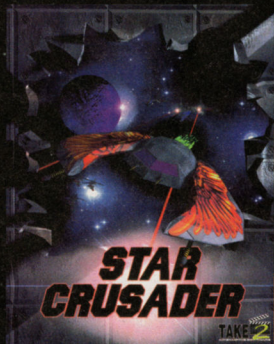
* The Gorene Empire is at war with the Alien Alliance. The ally you choose and the battle strategy you devise will determine who controls the Ascalon Rift.

* Choose your ally from either of opposing sides. Fly eleven different ships loaded with weaponry. Depart for over 100 varying missions. Then switch sides for unparalleled replayability.

* Plot strategies, orchestrate battles, fly stealth missions, and conquer territories, with full combat inside nebulas and asteroid fields.

* Riveting hyper realistic 3-D graphics, with fully texture mapped ships, on the fly translucency, Gouraud and Phong shading, and cinematic multimedia videos.

* Driving music, searing sound effects and, on the CD-ROM version, fully digitized speech delivered by professional actors.



FOR IBM PC AND IBM PC CD ROM

Distributed by
GAMETEK

TAKE 2
INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE

Product Information Number 171

PC GAMER CONTENTS

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3 • AUGUST 1994

Cover Story:

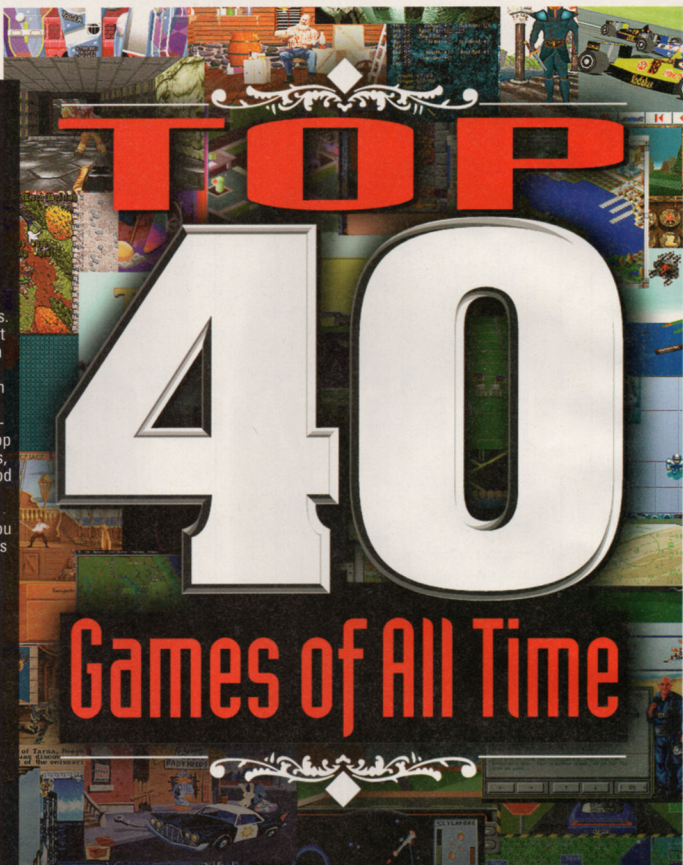
Top 40 Games of All Time

We argued. We fought. We formed pacts amongst ourselves. Some of us decided we wouldn't speak to the others for days at a time. Sometimes it all seemed like it just was more trouble than it was worth.

But eventually we completed it — the official *PC Gamer* Top 40 Games of All Time — and yes, it *was* worth it after all! You'll nod sagely in agreement when you see some of the choices. You'll scream with frustration when you check out others. But one thing's for sure: You won't be able to ignore it.

**Our Mammoth
Top 40 Feature
Starts on Page**

32



What are Your Top 40 Games of All Time?

Chances are, you tore the plastic from this issue and flipped right to the *PC Gamer* Top 40 feature — in which case you're either delighted to see that we agree with you about how good your favorites are, or you're outraged that we left your favorites off the list entirely. Whatever the case, we'll especially expect our Top 40 to be one of the most controversial pieces you'll see in this (or any other) magazine all year.

Whether you agree or disagree with our list, we want to hear from you. We'll be collecting your Top 40 lists over the next few months, tallying all our readers' choices to come up with the *PC Gamer* Readers' Top 40, which we'll print in our December issue. You can bet that your fellow read-

ers — and the software industry — will be looking forward to the results! So write to us at:

PC GAMER TOP 40
300-A South Westgate Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407
E-MAIL: pececegee@aol.com

And once you've sent us your picks, don't forget that there's a lot more great stuff waiting for you in this issue. As usual, we've crammed every page with information, insights, news, and reviews — all in that inimitable *PC Gamer* style. So get back to the magazine, and we look forward to hearing from you.

— Matt and Steve



Matt

Steve

Features

32 Top 40 Games of All Time

This is it — our definitive listing of the finest, most-influential, and downright playable games on the entire planet. We expect the controversy to start, ohh, any moment now....

— by Matt Firme and The Editors

44 Virtual Reality: Are We Having Fun Yet?

We've seen the future, and it's fully immersive.

— by T. Liam McDonald



44



8

8 Wing Commander III

Star Wars' Mark Hamill and other familiar faces star in the most ambitious and high-profile Wing Commander yet. This will undoubtedly be one of the most talked about games of the year.

12 Skyrealms of Jorune: Alien Logic

Three years in the making, SST's new, non-AD&D role playing game features perhaps the most player freedom yet seen in an RPG.

16 Star Crusader

Do we need another outer-space flight sim? We do when it plays as smoothly, and tells such a subtly hued tale, as this debut title from Take Two Interactive.

18 MetalTech: Earth Seige

The first of the new wave of robot fighting games is almost here — and it promises to be a real doozy.



62

Reviews

All the new PC games rated

- 78 Alien Legacy
- 84 Bridge Baron for Windows
- 57 Casino Expert for Windows
- 82 Classic Collection:
Interplay's 10 Year Anthology
- 72 D-Day The Beginning
of the End
- 68 Dragon's Lair
- 66 Evasive Action
- 62 Fields of Glory
- 54 Inherit the Earth

- 80 Kingdoms of Germany
- 60 Millennium Auction
- 74 Origo
- 52 Pacific Strike
- 84 Pursue the Pennant
- 56 Seaworthy
- 58 Serf City: Life is Feudal
- 64 Shadow of the Comet
- 57 SSN-21 Sea Wolf
- 70 Time Out Sports Baseball
- 76 X-COM

On the disk!

Detroit by Impressions

For a complete playing guide to this enormous, excellent demo, just turn the page. When we say hours of gameplay here, what we really mean is hours and hours and hours....



Departments

- 22 **Eyewitness**
News, Game Previews, Sales Charts, and More.
- 86 **Extended Play**
New levels for *Spear of Destiny*, plus *The Blue & the Gray* add-ons, and assorted new CD-ROM versions of old games — by T. Liam McDonald
- 89 **The Desktop General**
Have you grown weary of refighiting the same old conflicts? Bill holds forth on a few more imaginative war games he's itching to play — by William R. Trotter
- 90 **Alternate Lives**
Don't take the on-line whiners too seriously! — by Neil Randall
- 92 **The Learning Game**
Heidi takes a look at *Sitting on the Farm*, *Odell Down Under*, and other new educational programs — by Heidi Aycock
- 95 **Sim Column**
More investigations into the world of simulations — by Scott Wolf
- 98 **Tim's Tech-Shop**
DOS extends, and why they're likely to remain a problem for some time to come — by Tim Victor
- 100 **Strategy Central**
Hints and tips to games like *Myst*, *Goblins Quest 3*, *Ultima VIII* and more.
- 106 **Letters**
In which we turn things over to you
- 111 **Contest**
Win a laser disc player, the Star Wars logo on disc, and loads more good stuff, courtesy of the friendly folks at LucasArts.
- 112 **Next issue**
There will be a next issue. That much, at least, is certain....

PC Gamer (ISSN 1099-7088) is published monthly by GP Publications, Inc., Suite 210, 1300 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010. Second-class postage paid at Oceanside, CA, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year (12 issues) \$16.95 (U.S.); Canada \$25.00. Canadian price includes postage and GST (P13039686). Outside US and Canada: Add \$20.00 per issue. For customer service, write PC Gamer Customer Service Dept., Suite 210, 1300 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010. Postmaster: please send change of address to PC Gamer, Suite 210, 1300 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010. Corporate, advertising sales, and circulation offices: Suite 210, 1300 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010. Phone: (415) 696-1088. FAX: (415) 696-1076. Editorial and production offices: 300 S. Wacker Drive, Greensboro, NC 27403. Phone: (919) 852-6711. FAX: (919) 852-1189. Editorial production information should be addressed to: Editor, PC Gamer, P.O. Box 20884, Greensboro, NC 27429. Overnight delivery parcels should be addressed to PC Gamer, 300 S.W. Wacker Drive, Greensboro, NC 27403. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. GP Publications, Inc., also publishes *Game Players* (Sage-Hennessy), *CD-ROM Today*, *The Magazine of Personal Multimedia*, *Computer Entertainment News*, and *Game Players Encyclopedia* covering Nintendo, Sega, and PC games. Entire contents copyright 1994, GP Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Game Players, Game Players Guide, and Game Players Encyclopedia are trademarks of GP Publications, Inc. Products named in these pages are trademarks or trademarks of their respective companies. GP Publications, Inc., is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in PC Gamer. Printed in U.S.A.

COVER DISK

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

Last month, we appeased the arcade-loving beast in all of us with *Pinball Fantasies* and *Sink or Swim*. This time around, however, we've got a treat for all you strategists: *Detroit*, the impressive and playable new economic simulation from Impressions.

Detroit

By Impressions

Detroit puts you in charge of your own automotive company, and gives you the chance build an empire that would put Henry Ford to shame. You control everything from the names of your individual cars and the shape of their fenders, to advertising budgets and workers' wages. You'll have to create innovative designs, test them on the track, and conduct research to determine how strong the public demand is for each model in your line. And you'll have to balance the price of each vehicle against development costs and profit margins.

All this might be overwhelming, if not for *Detroit's* simple, intuitive interface. Every game function is handled through self-explanatory windows, so doing what needs to be done is never more time-consuming than *deciding* what needs to be done.



Our demo version of *Detroit* will let you play for five years of turn-based gameplay — literally *hours* of some of the best strategy gaming around. You'll get a lot more in the full retail version, though — about 95 years more. Yes, you'll get to see your empire through a full century of growth and development, through design changes that will take you from the days of the Model T to tomorrow's concept cars. One other note: our demo includes a modem play option, but be warned — it's very incomplete, and really isn't meant to do anything more than give you a taste of the modem option available in the retail version of the game.



Your first choice, once you get the game up and running, will be what difficulty level you'll play on. The easier the difficulty setting, the more cash you start out with; at the hardest level, you actually start out in debt.



The archive is where you'll store car designs that aren't currently in use, just in case demand grows and you want to introduce them later.



Of course, you'll choose your starting territory. Your first time out, it's best to choose the northwestern U.S., where demand in 1908 is the highest. Once you've gained some experience, you can select a more challenging area.

Marketing is very important, as intensive advertising in each sales territory will drive demand for your vehicles and create new sales.



Research and development are very important, and this is where you'll tend to them. In the early stages, assign as many technicians to suspension, engines, and bodies as you can afford.



This is the main screen, from which you'll access all the automotive-type functions you'll have to perform during the game.

Click on this building to access the factories and sales screen. You'll see a map of the world, with your factories and offices displayed. From this, you'll assign workers to production lines, decide which models are for sale in a given territory, and adjust car prices.



New!

Spear of Destiny Mission Disks!

**Mission 2:
Return to Danger**

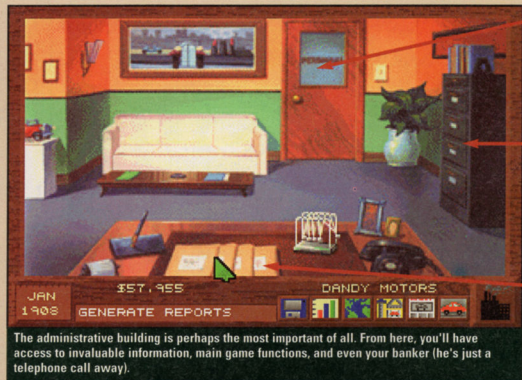
**Mission 3:
Ultimate Challenge**

The Action Continues. . . New Challenges!

in two brand new missions for the fantastic virtual reality game - Spear of Destiny! Now you can enjoy more of the heart-pounding, adrenaline-pumping excitement you loved in the original game! These terrific new missions feature all new floors, guards, bosses, graphics and sounds!

Each mission features 21 exciting new levels, with new enemy guards, new treasures and a whole new fortress to penetrate. New puzzles require thought as well as quick reflexes. Fantastic new art and unbelievable digital sound make these the most exciting games ever! Get the latest Spear of Destiny missions today!





The administrative building is perhaps the most important of all. From here, you'll have access to invaluable information, main game functions, and even your banker (he's just a telephone call away).



The personnel office is where you'll hire and fire workers, and adjust their salaries and benefits. Pay your people fairly, or you might find yourself with a strike on your hands.

Click on the file cabinet to access main game functions, including saving and loading games, and quitting to DOS.



The most important information in the game is to be found in reports on your desk. Consult them each month to make sure you're ahead of the competition.



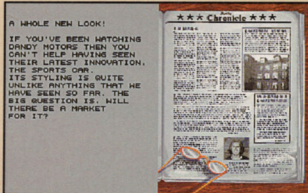
From here, you'll do your actual automotive design work. You can name your vehicle, choose a body type, a vehicle type, and access a list of available parts.



When you order that your new model be built, you'll move to this testing screen where the car's performance is evaluated. Watch the overall rating: if it's too low, you might want to tweak your design.



Click here to order your turn. When you do so, you'll see a synopsis of the decisions you've made for that month, and then will be asked to confirm them.



As you and your competitors make new advances in automotive design, various newspapers will carry the story to the outside world.

Getting Started

To run *Detroit*, you'll need at least a 286 with 640K RAM, 4MB hard-drive space, MS-DOS 3.0 or later, VGA, and a Microsoft-compatible mouse. To get the most out of the game, though, we recommend a 386 or faster CPU.

Installing the game is simple. Just insert the disk in your 3.5" drive, type the letter of that drive followed by a colon (A: or B:), and press enter. Now type INSTALL, press enter again, and *Detroit* will install itself to your hard drive. When the installation has finished, a very comprehensive README.TXT will be displayed. Take the time to read it; it will answer most of the questions you might have about the *Detroit* demo.

PCG

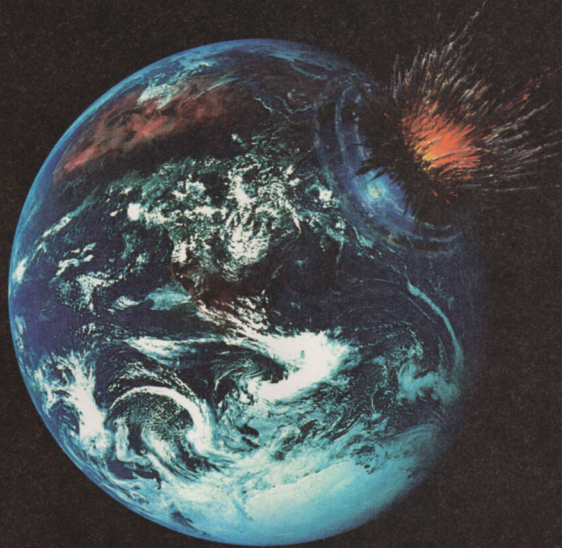
If you're having technical problems...

If your Coverdisk is damaged and won't load, mail it to:

PC Gamer Coverdisk #3
300-A South Westgate Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407

If you're having technical problems with the demo once installed, call Impressions technical support at (617) 225-0848 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday-Friday.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



OUTPOST

BUILD MANKIND'S FUTURE IN SPACE

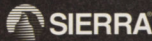
Boom. Earth is destroyed by a catastrophic event, and you're responsible for rebuilding civilization on another planet. Lucky you. Where you go and if you survive is up to you - there's a galaxy of possibilities.

Based on NASA research in planetary science, robotics, terraforming, and interstellar spacecraft design, *Outpost* places you in control of the most comprehensive strategy simulation ever developed for the PC. No kidding. From the colonization



starship to the robominers and monorail systems you'll use on the planet surface, *Outpost's* photo-realism and 3-D rendered animation are unprecedented.

Develop agriculture, mining and manufacturing to survive, and then invest in research and recreation facilities to make life more comfortable for your colonists - hopefully they'll be around long enough to enjoy it. Because, in the end, the decisions you make will determine the destiny of mankind.



See your local retailer or call 1-800-757-7707

Product Information Number 109

EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

Wing Commander III

Origin Raises the Stakes. Again.

One of the most popular game series ever adds a handful of genuine movie stars. The best just got a lot better.

by Neil West



Game: Wing Commander III
 Developer: Origin Systems, Inc.
 Publisher: Origin Systems, Inc.
 Projected Price: TBA
 Percent Complete: 50%

In a nutshell:

Origin offers its latest version of Wing Commander to a new generation of game players — those with CD-ROMs, 486DX processors and 8MB of RAM, to be precise. You can run it with less, but just barely.

What's so special?

It's the most expensive computer game ever attempted, it's got history on its side (the previous WC games were state of the art in their day) and it's got Mark "Luke Skywalker" Hamill in it.

Why should I care?

Because, despite the fact that hype's the norm in PC game marketing, there's a very real chance that this could live up to it all — and then some. The gameplay is solid, the interaction really exists (come on, that's praise indeed these days) and this will undoubtedly become the yardstick by which subsequent action/sims will be judged.

And when's it coming out?

Look for the big release right around Thanksgiving this year. That should get the holidays started right!



The new-look Kifraith, actually human actors in elaborate animatronic costumes, help bring the Wing Commander universe to life. So does actor Tim Curry, who does the voice of Melek.

Big numbers. No matter how you look at Origin's *Wing Commander III*, big numbers hit you squarely in the face. The production budget comes in at a whopping \$3,000,000 — that's more than for some movies. The amount of game data involved is gigantic: two CD-ROMs, and about a Gigabyte of stuff. The number of man-hours it's taken to put everything together is pretty massive too; a full development team's been working flat-out on the project for the last year and a half. And since it's an Origin product, you'll need a pretty fast machine to get the most out of it: at least a 486/DX with double-speed CD-ROM and 8 MB RAM.

What makes all this ambitiousness worthwhile is the enormous potential audience Origin believes they have for Wing Commander. The line as a whole has already sold in excess of 2.5 million units

worldwide, and this new game is intended to take the series to a new level of popularity. At least, that's the theory....

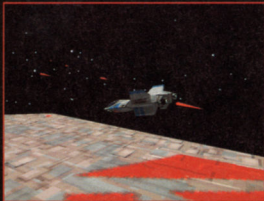
And it could be a viable one, too. When you consider the track record of the development team involved, the caliber of talent enlisted to appear in front of the camera, and the power of the systems destined to run it, *Wing Commander III* might even surpass Origin's own high expectations.

Wing III is important for another reason, too. Origin is confident that this is the game to finally smash the conception that live video footage and involving gameplay can't coexist. Could this be the



John Rhys-Davies (left) and Mark Hamill in a scene from *WCIII*. The actors performed their roles before a green screen, and the starfield and effects were then laid in at post-production.

While the graphics in the first two *Wing Commander* games were good, objects tended to get blocky once you got up close to them, with huge pixels that reminded you that it was, after all, only a game. That's changed with *Wing Commander III*: Even when you get very close to extremely large objects, the SVGA graphics stay sharp, crisp, and realistic. Check out the texture-mapping on both the Arrow Fighter and Kilrathi transport in this intense attack run.



first genuine (wait for it) interactive movie? Origin reckons so, and there are a few good reasons to believe they might be right:

- **It's deliberately designed for top-of-the-line hardware only**
When Origin talks about a minimum system requirement, the bare minimum they refer is just that — the minimum you'll need to actually get the thing running. It's no secret that to get the most out of *WCIII* you're going to need a powerful set-up — at the very least, we're talking a DX-4 or 486DX2/66MHz with 8MB of RAM. And with this sort of machine, the designers will have the muscle they need to try some very impressive things.

But is such a machine too much to ask of gamers? Origin's Galen Svanas doesn't think so. "Origin games have always been designed for the cutting edge of mainstream technology, and for people who upgrade often. Now, something like 60% of all new PC systems that are bought are 486-based, include a CD ROM and usually come with 8Mbyte of RAM, so we're really not leading the market too much." As they've done before, Origin also talk about this game actively generating hardware sales.

- ***Wing Commander III* is set in space**
Well, of course it is, you're probably thinking. But the point we're trying to make here is that if any setting is conducive to making a believable interactive movie, it's outer space. Consider: A major problem with the traditional play-watch-play breed of interactive movie is

that the difference in sophistication between the game bits and the movie bits is cruelly obvious. It's not easy to suspend your disbelief when you're constantly required to jump between interacting with what is quite obviously a computer-generated world, then watching a snippet of real-world movie footage. With a game set in space, however, the difference becomes blurred.

After all, few of us gamers have ever been in space. The only frame of reference we have as to what being there is actually like comes from the movies — which often use computer-generated worlds. So a game set in space stands a far better chance of actually

appearing "real." The in-game scenes just tend to sit more comfortably with the "live" video footage — especially when the computer graphics used are as sophisticated as the ones that are on display here.

- **They've only gone and hired Luke Skywalker himself**

I grew up on the Star Wars movies, and the odds are good that you did, too. The kids who idolized

The Pride of the Confederation: Jennifer MacDonald, Mark Hamill, and Ginger Lynn Allen.



Luke Skywalker 15 years ago are exactly the same people who form the core of 1994's game players. So Mark Hamill is the perfect man to cast as the hero of *Wing Commander III*. Few other actors (and probably no other even vaguely affordable ones) can jump-start the emotions and passion of a gameplaying generation like he can. Don't underestimate this — it's not been disclosed how much Origin is paying him, but you can guarantee they're getting a mind-blowing bang for their buck.

• **It's 100% interactive**

Back on the space station, in between the space battles, the characters played by actors Mark Hamill, Ginger Lynn Allen, Malcolm McDowell, and so on do their video-taped thing: mainly, talk over the last mission and move the plot forward. But you don't just get to watch, you get to interact. No, really. Origin's David Swafford:

"Within each conversation, you'll be

The Stars of *Wing Commander III*

Wing Commander III combines live-action sequences with that great *Wing Commander* feel we all know and love. And this isn't cut-rate video production, either. Just look at the cast (Origin has assembled for this thing:

Mark Hamill (Blain) — You know him best as Luke Skywalker, of *Star Wars* fame. Now, he gets to tackle an all-new role in one of PC gaming's most enduring series.

Malcolm McDowell (Tolwyn) — The star of *A Clockwork Orange*, *...Time After Time*, and many others. You've just got to love that McDowell intensity.

John Rhys-Davies (Paladin) — Harrison Ford's buddy in all three Indiana Jones movies, his recent work includes the TV series *The Untouchables*. He's also the host of The Learning Channel's series *Archaeology*.

Ginger Lynn Allen (Rachel) — Ms. Allen's recent credits include *Bound and Gagged* — *A Love Story*, *Young Guns II*, and *Skin Deep*. You might also have seen her in such TV series as *NYPD Blue*, *Silk Stalkings*, and *Super Force*.

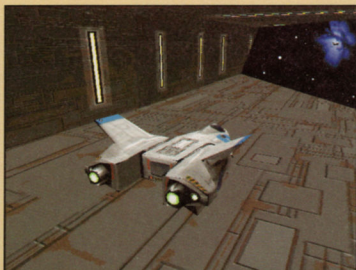
Jennifer MacDonald (Flint) — MacDonald starred as a cyborg in the recent *Terminal Force*. She can also be seen in *The Collector*, *Shades of Black*, and *California Dreamin'*. She's also a student of martial arts.

Thomas F. Wilson (Maniac) — He was the bully you loved to hate in all three of the *Back to the Future* series. His other credits include *Action Jackson*, *April Fool's Day*, and *Let's Get Harry*.

Jason Bernard (Eisen) — Bernard currently co-stars on the FOX series *Herman's Head*, and has acted in films including *No Way Out*, *Blue Thunder* (with McDowell, oddly enough), *War Games*, and *Car Wash*.

Courtney Gains (Rollins) — Gains has been seen in *Memphis Belle*, *Children of the Corn*, *The 'Bubs*, *Colors*, and was also in *Back to the Future*.

Joshua Lucas (Rashed) — Lucas is a regular on the series *The Man from Snowy River*, and has been seen in *Jake and the Fatman*, *Life Goes On*, and *Parker Lewis Can't Lose*. His film credits include *Alive* and *Class of '61*.



Wing Commander pioneered the use of cinematic cut sequences. With the new graphics technology in *Wing III*, players will now, more than ever, feel like they're in a movie.

actively to have your character respond positively or negatively to what's being said. These responses will, in turn, affect other conversations, and so on and so on. So you might want to go through the game being positive, soothing everyone's egos and generally playing the role of the peacemaker. Or you may choose to react negatively to situations and be a real hard-core, strict commander. These different approaches will reveal nuances in

Commander I and II, and picks up where the last game left off. The humans are on the losing end of it now, and mankind is pretty much on its last legs. So, in a last-ditch attempt they decide to develop a big planet-buster known as the B.M.F. (I have an idea as to what this might stand for, but I'm not sure I should say — Neil), and the plan is that since the humans are so outnumbered and so outgunned, this B.M.F. can provide them with one last chance. The plan is to take it to the Kilrathi homeland and let the B.M.F. get to work, in the hope that by chopping off the Kilrathi head, in a manner of speaking, the body will also die. But, as is so often the case in the *Wing Commander* universe, someone betrays the humans, and the Kilrathi are able to steal the prototype B.M.F.. So it looks as if mankind is pretty much S.O.L."

Just the way we like it! Time, then, for a hero:

"At the game's start, we have several sub-stories and plot lines to tie together, including a rescue mission to free the

"Origin games have always been designed for the cutting edge of mainstream technology, and for people who upgrade often."

— Galen Svanas, Origin

the way you're treated by your fellow wing men, and hence affect the outcome of the game. This also means that there are several endgame sequences — not just a win or a loss, but different variations of winning and losing."

But enough about how great *Wing Commander III* should turn out to be. Let's take a couple of paragraphs to put it all in context. For a start, what's the storyline all about this time?

David Swafford: "*Wing Commander III* is set in the same universe as *Wing*

B.M.F.'s designer from a Kilrathi prison, find out who in the human camp has betrayed mankind, and then see if there's a way to recover the weapon or destroy the Kilrathi homeland by other means."

It sounds exciting, especially for those of us who've thrilled to the other *Wing Commander* games. Of all the games I've seen in development over the last six months, *WCIII* comes the closest to being a sure-fire winner. It's difficult to see how it can be anything less than spectacular. I, for one, can't wait...



When all the video and beautifully rendered background art is finally pieced together, the results can be nothing short of amazing. *Wing Commander III* does an excellent job of creating the illusion of an entirely alien, yet realistic and believable, game world.

Chris Roberts: The man behind the Wing Commander series

In between shooting scenes in an LA film studio, Wing Commander creator and WCIII producer Chris Roberts takes time out to talk to PC Gamer:

PC Gamer: Here you are surrounded by a film crew, a large number of whom have just come from finishing off second-unit duties for *True Lies*, the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger/James Cameron blockbuster. Mark Hamill is in the trailer behind us waiting for your next call. How do you like the move from "mere" game producer to being (effectively) a movie director?

Chris Roberts: I'm having a total blast. Previously, I've worked with 20 or 30 people (artists, programmers and musicians), and it's been a matter of sitting down in a meeting, talking through what we want to do, then sending everyone off. Then, a couple of months later, everyone comes back with what they've accomplished and we get the finished results. But

with directing live action, the whole process is more condensed. It requires much more concentration — but then there's the instant gratification of seeing the rushes at the end of the day.

Here, it costs so much money every day that you must be completely organized and professional. It's very different from the traditional way of making PC games.

PC Gamer: Much of the target audience for *WCIII* will be made up of new PC owners, and there's the chance that this could be the first game they'll ever play. To what extent has *WCIII* been simplified from previous versions to ease these "virgin gamers" into the game?

Chris

Roberts: For the 3DO version, things have been simplified. The PC version is just as complex as previous *Wing Commander* games, but in an optional way: players will be able to tinker around with weapons, explore new strategies and so on if they want to, but that

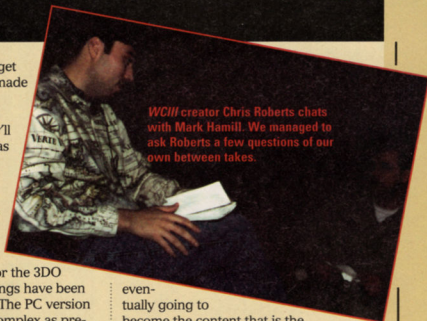
isn't an essential part of playing the game. The computer will make a lot of choices for you if you leave it to its own devices and you'd rather just sit back and enjoy the action.

PC Gamer: You're really upping the stakes of game development here. How easy will it be for "normal" games to compete after the epic production of *WCIII*?

Chris Roberts: It's true that you can never go backwards. Once you've played a game featuring new technology, it's very difficult to achieve the suspension of disbelief necessary to get into older games, be they text adventures or primitive 3D polygons. And with each leap forward in technology, the subset of the population playing games increases. I guess the eventual goal is to come up with a game that will appeal to anyone who's ever enjoyed simply watching TV. We all want to attract the largest audience possible, and I think that this is a really big step toward increasing the PC gaming market.

PC Gamer: So do you see games in the future having to compete on these \$3 million terms in order to stand a chance? What will a future games' success rely on? Money? Storyline? Gameplay?

Chris Roberts: Technology doesn't really matter any more. I mean everyone's got texture-mapping, Gouraud shading, all that sort of stuff, and so it really comes down to how well you can tell a story. Content will matter more than technology in the near future. So as we move toward a movie-studio way of producing games, it's



WCIII creator Chris Roberts chats with Mark Hamill. We managed to ask Roberts a few questions of our own between takes.



Jason Bernard (left) and Mark Hamill get ready for an important *WCIII* scene.

eventually going to become the content that is the most important. I mean, this will take four or five years to fully happen, and there will be a swing towards big budget productions in the meanwhile. But eventually, it will all come back down to the people with the ideas and the content."

PC Gamer: Let's quickly go over the casting of Mark Hamill. Why did you choose him for the lead role?

Chris Roberts: Firstly, I wanted to make sure that Hollywood production values were applied all the way through *WCIII*'s production — and that applies to the casting decisions. A lot of people have regarded live footage as being real cheesy because, say, the company got the secretary to be the

star and maybe all the programmer's mates are goofing around in the background. So I wanted really well-known actors and a screenplay written by experienced, professional screenwriters.

So, Mark Hamill. To start with, I had real a problem casting the lead because you need someone who you immediately recognize as a hero, but who doesn't have such a dominant personality, or is so overbearing, that it's impossible for the player to identify with him. You need what I call a "reactive" movie hero, someone like Harrison Ford or Kevin Costner who don't really project a personality when something happens, but somehow give the feeling that a common man has triumphed over adversity.

So, anyway, I originally had Mark Hamill in mind for the Maniac character, but Tom Wilson came in to read for the role (he's the guy who played Biff in *Back To The Future 1, 2 and 3*) and he nailed the role so completely — the character was so funny — that we had to give him the part. We realized that Mark was too nice to play Maniac, and started wondering if he'd be interested in playing the hero instead.

PC Gamer: Chris, thanks very much.



Colonel Hobbes sneaks a last look at his lines before the cameras roll.

Skyrealms of Jorune:

Look, Ma — No Elves!

SSI may have given up the right to make AD&D games, but are they giving up RPGs? Not even close.

by Matt Bielby



Game: Skyrealms of Jorune: Alien Logic
 Developer: Andrew Leker, SSI
 Publisher: Strategic Simulations, Inc.
 Projected price: \$50.00
 Percent complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

SSI won't be doing any more Advanced Dungeons & Dragons games, but fans needn't worry—they're replacing it with their own RPG series in 1995. Before that, though, there's *Alien Logic*, a radical new RPG that could lead to a series of its own.

What's so special?

Three years in the making, the first Jorune game features more complex game mechanics than most RPGs. SSI wants to give the player as much freedom as possible, with options to play in different ways.

Why should I care?

The Jorune world offers not only an intricately thought-out game environment, but a flexible gaming system that's easily adapted to your personality and style. These sort of gameplay choices could very well change the way you look at RPGs.

And when's it coming out?

The initial CD-ROM version should ship in August, with the floppy disk to follow in September (or shortly after).



here've been radical changes at SSI over the last few months. For years, the backbone of the business has been faithfully converting TSR's famous Advanced Dungeons & Dragons series of paper role-playing games to computer format, but no longer. Their relationship with TSR officially ends with *Dark Sun: Wake of the*

new line will be designed from the start with that firmly in mind."

The first of SSI's as-yet-unnamed new series should be due in the first quarter of '95, and we'll have much more detailed coverage of it toward the end of this year. In the meantime, however, SSI is set to thrill us with *Skyrealms of Jorune: Alien Logic*—the first in what could grow into a new series of RPGs with a decidedly different bent.

Everything about the first Jorune game, which has been in development for the last three years, is almost the direct opposite of what we've come to expect from a traditional RPG:

• There are no arcs, fairies, or wizards in it.

Jorune is not your standard Tolkien-influenced, anything-can-happen fantasy world, but is instead an extensively thought-out alien planet, with its own fixed scientific rules (however strange they may be) and a history that's been worked out to account for the past 1000 years.

"The underlying concept for Jorune is pure sci-fi," says Dunn. "The game is set far in man's



She's not talking about what you think she's talking about! This young lady will teach your character the secrets of *isho*—and that can prove invaluable in your travels on this strange world.

Ravager; after that, TSR will begin converting its games in-house. In the meantime, SSI is launching a whole new series of role players into the marketplace, using the kind of fantasy setting and first-person perspective familiar to role-playing fans, but more directly tailored to the specific demands of a computerized role-playing game.

As SSI's Bill Dunn explains: "One frustrating thing we found about working with the TSR games was that we had to remain faithful to the paper versions of those games, which normally had numerous characters and were really designed for about four or five players. Of course, computer RPGs are much more likely to be played by just a single person, and our

future, and assumes faster than light travel. The planet Jorune is a huge, ancient, Earthlike planet, located midway



One of *Alien Logic's* side-view combat scenes. Here you're fighting a pair of *isho*-wielding Shanthas, one of whom is trying to trap you unharmed in a force bubble.

Alien Logic

between several space empires — including the human Federation — and is highly habitable by different life forms. Thus it's bore the brunt of many interstellar invasions over the years, and has been the site of numerous wars between aliens, humans, and so on.

"The most unusual thing about the planet is that it generates some very powerful alien energy forces, known as *isho*, that are active in the atmosphere. Aliens and some mutated humans can harness *isho* to various ends, though it remains a mystery to normal humans. Scientists of many species are fascinated by *isho*, which is another reason you've got so many different races inhabiting the planet."

Perhaps the most unusual physical thing about *Jorune*, however, are the "skyrealms" of the game's title — vast, levitating land masses that float in the skies above the planet, buoyed by *isho* forces. Much of the action of the game takes place on these skyrealms, though getting up to them can be a problem....

*** You can play the entire game and never engage in combat.**

Well, almost. One of the most striking aspects of the *Jorune* game world is that it's been designed to give the player as much leeway as possible. Though you'll

"Our whole model for the game is based on player choice. That is, the player decides what his response to a challenge will be — though it's probably not in his best interest to do everything by peaceful means."

Alien Logic producer Bill Dunn

have to raise your sword in anger occasionally, this is one RPG where combat decidedly takes a back seat — if that's what you wish.

Bill Dunn points out that "Violence is very definitely not your only option for most of the game, though it's true you won't be able to solve every problem by being a smooth talker. Players will be given plenty of opportunities for combat, but the important thing is that it's not forced upon them.

"Our whole model for the game is based on player choice. That is, the player decides what his response to a challenge will be — though it's probably not in his best interest to do everything by peaceful means. For instance, there will be definite delays or additional chal-

lenges if you opt not to fight, and there may even be rewards for solving certain situations with combat. The reason we're emphasizing the fact that combat is often only one means of solving a problem is to make clear how different *Jorune* will be from other RPGs. Now, it won't be like the old 8-bit Electronic Arts game *Ali Baba* — which is the only computer RPG I've seen that requires no combat at all — but it will certainly be different from what people brought up on AD&D or other series will be used to."

*** You're not limited to using one of the traditional RPG viewpoints.**

Most role-playing games rely entirely on one of two traditional viewpoints to depict your surroundings. The current fave seems to be the first-person, you-are-there perspective, much like you'd find in *Dungeon Master*, the *Eye of the Beholder* and *Might & Magic* series, and the *Ultima Underworld* games. The other most common display is the top-down-and/or-oblique view, variations of which are used in most of SSI's AD&G games, the *Ultima* series, and *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands*. *Alien Logic*, however, is very different, employing a variety of different — and unusual — viewpoints to depict the action.

During combat and when you're

exploring inside buildings, for instance, the action takes place from a horizontally scrolling 2D view. When traveling large distances, you see a hand holding a scanner in the foreground and a map in the background. And a view from high up in the air, as if you were looking down from a hot-air balloon, is used for an overview of important locations. While the characters are on these screens are tiny, the player is still in complete control, and can move the hero around the landscape any way he wishes. As to these a face-to-face perspective for conversation, and you've got a game that deliberately spurns convention when it comes to depicting the passage of events. Once again, it's crystal clear that this is no ordinary RPG.

Loving the Alien

Don't know what all those pesky off-worlders are blathering on about? Here's a handy guide to help you make sense of things.

At the time *Skyrealms of Jorune: Alien Logic* is set, assorted human and non-human tribes and races populate the planet of *Jorune* — and they don't always co-exist peacefully. Some are hostile to your quest, some are helpful, and many others operate under mysterious agendas of their own which may or may not come coincide with your own. The major races you'll come across are listed below, but take some of these broad descriptions with a pinch of salt: individual aliens may not conform to the expected racial stereotypes....



The Thinn are master craftsmen, indigenous to *Jorune*. Their jewelry, woodworking, and weaving are highly valued on *Jorune* and other planets.

eyeless, seeing the world entirely through the use of *isho* energy.

Shantha

Once the indigenous ruling race on *Jorune*, the *Shantha* have been decimated by over 5000 years of warfare against other invading races, chiefly the humans. They're currently engaged in a stalemated cold war with the humans. The *Shantha* are underground dwellers who use *isho*, rather than conventional technology, as their main tool. The *Shantha* are



Cruger are genetically modified cats — big cats, that is — who are bi-pedal and boast useful opposable thumbs.

Other Indigenous Races

A number of other intelligent indigenous races still survive on the planet after eons of alien invasion, but they are mostly either dying out or have adapted to human culture.



Humans mutants fall into two classes: *isho* users (like your character) and larger, more aggressive humans. You can't tell necessarily tell them apart at a glance, however.

Humans

First invaded *Jorune* some 3000 or so years ago. Currently dominate the planet using advanced technology. However, they only control one major city so far.

Human Mutants

Unusual humans have evolved over 100 or so generations into a state of harmony with the planet *Jorune*. The player's character is a human mutant — one who's adept at using the mysterious forces of *isho*.

Assorted Genetically Engineered Species

These are beings engineered by humans and others during the various wars, and have complex genetic traits giving them unusual abilities.



The *Shantha*, masters of *isho*, are currently in a stalemated war with humans.

Various Alien Races

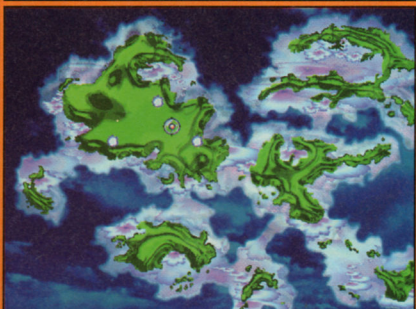
These are either recent invaders, or the descendants of previous generations of invading aliens who've stayed on *Jorune* and survived or co-operated with the dominant humans.



The Thridde are a leftover servitor race, reminiscent of mages in AD&D games.

Alien Servitor Races

These are species of weak-willed beings that were left on *Jorune* after their master race was driven off. Some of the most odd or even humorous species, such as the Thridde, are servitor races.



Different ways to view *Alien Logic* (Clockwise from top left): The scanner view, for when you're on the move; the conversational view; the overhead map, which you can use for teleporting; and the 2D combat sequence.

So where have all these different ideas come from? Well, the story of how the *Jorune* world finally wound up in this incarnation is an odd one, worth going into briefly here. The game first surfaced as a paper RPG around 10 years ago, published by a tiny company called Cerdas. The game's developer, Andrew Leker, was also a programmer, and he had the idea of tailoring his game world for computer games — an idea he brought to SSI a few years ago. Since then, *Alien Logic*'s been in development — but it's by no means a direct translation of the paper version, as SSI's AD&D games often were.

"The game has taken so long to develop because it's not easy setting up a reliable code that allows for perfect player freedom," explains Bill Dunn, "which is probably why most people don't even bother to try it. With *Alien Logic*, Andrew's built in a number of different ways for you to get to the end of the game, as well as three ways — aggressive, conversational and so on — to deal with the problems you come up against.

"To be honest, this has proven to be pretty difficult to implement, but will certainly be worth it if we succeed. This is also the feature that I'd say is the most different from other RPGs, and we hope

will attract even the most jaded of users. Most games imply that having a huge world, or a vast magic system, means more player choice, but does it really? Or



Remember that friendly lady from the first page? This is what she shows you!

does it just mean you've got more different places to have the same repetitive and ultimately boring combat and magical events occur? For me, player choice has to be built in from scratch."

While most computer RPGs have traditionally followed the party-of-characters-moving-about-the-landscape format, *Skyrealms of Jorune* takes its cue from the more recent trend of integrating every possible ability into one hero — a system which better reflects the fact that most computer RPGs are played by a sin-

gle player. The character you control, a human mutant, is able to do things that normal humans can't, like use *isho*.

As the game opens, you find that your village is now empty of life, and you set out to learn what happened. Once you're on that quest, further tasks present themselves, eventually bringing you into conflict with a powerful evil presence. You don't collect a party around you, but you do have conversations with the people and creatures you meet.

"Probably the nicest thing about *Alien Logic* is that the aliens all have their own personalities and agendas," says Steve Okano, an SSI playtester working on the game, "that might not make too much sense to you and me. Some of them are very dedicated to a certain world view and focus on certain tasks, while others are less predictable and may react in different ways depending on the mood they're in. The Thriddle, for instance, are very matter-of-fact in the way they speak. Their tone may sound rude to you, but that's just the way they are."

Of course, that shouldn't come as any kind of surprise at all. These are aliens we're talking about, remember, and they operate under "Alien Logic"...

WING COMMANDER™

The life of a seasoned starfighter pilot isn't all glory and adventure. After years of following orders and losing ships and friends, you are finally the sole commander of the fleet, responsible for heading up a final strike against your enemy's homeland – either the Empire of Kilrah or the Confederation.

This war requires *real* strategy, not just hotshot piloting. You determine where to fight, how to fight, and what ships you need to get the job done. In *Wing Armada*, you have the freedom to build your own universe, your own missions and your own campaign.

Key Features:

- ▶ Pit yourself against a friend, computer, or with a friend against the computer – via modem or network.
- ▶ Choose to fly intense dogfight scenarios, search-and-destroy battles or extended campaigns.
- ▶ Never play the same game twice as you explore, fortify and mine hundreds of planets in an infinite number of randomly generated universes.
- ▶ Live out your life as a top-notch Terran or Kilrathi pilot and choose to fly up to 10 different ships.
- ▶ Customize taunts and controls with *Armada's* built-in audio file integrator and keyboard configuration utility.
- ▶ View RealSpace™ texture-mapped, 3-D polygonal ships at up to 25 frames per second!
- ▶ Carefully plot tactical moves to stop your enemy cold – but beware, the tides of war may swiftly turn your next move into your last!



Actual screens may vary.

A Stand-Alone Game

Made in U.S.A.



ORIGIN™
We create worlds

An Electronic Arts® Company

P.O. BOX 141750 AUSTIN, TX 78714

© 1994, ORIGIN Systems, Inc. Armada is a trademark of ORIGIN Systems, Inc. Origin, We create worlds and Wing Commander are registered trademarks of ORIGIN Systems, Inc. Electronic Arts is a registered trademark of Electronic Arts.

Star Crusader

Do We Need Another Space-Combat Game? Yes!

Take 2 recreates the Crusades in the far future, complete with all the moral questions that implies.

by Gary Meredith

E.M.I.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Star Crusader*
Developer: Take 2 Interactive Software
Publisher: Take 2 Interactive Software
Distributor: GameTek
Projected Price: TBA
Percent Complete: 85%

In a nutshell:

Take 2 aims to push the envelope of the space-flight simulator/strategy genre considerably, with a combination of advanced animation and (in particular) a more sophisticated storyline.

What's so special?

The simplistic plots of many sims are not much more than flimsy frameworks upon which to hang the action sequences. *Star Crusader*, however, puts forward the novel idea that life, even in a game, is more than black and white, good and bad, or right and wrong.

Why should I care?

Star Crusader manages to sustain the delicate balance between high-tech and high-adventure, and does so with a creative philosophy that rejects the well-trodden path.

And when's it coming out?

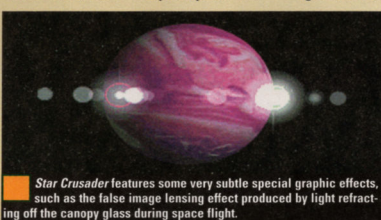
Star Crusader is scheduled for release in early September this year, and Take 2 is confident of making that date.

"Things change, the more they stay the same," you reflect, sadly, as you make one last pass over the devastation of yet another Rift world. Another planet beaten into submission, and still they resist. The benevolent blanket of the Gorene Empire extends its vast influence to bring civilization to a backward and unenlightened people, and what thanks is there? Only more resistance — and perhaps the tini-

Game designer F.J. Lennon, responsible for such past PC titles as *X-Men* and *MegaTraveller*, really wanted to create a futuristic interpretation of the Crusades. In place of the European Christians we have the Gorene Empire, which has similarly decided to "civilize" the rest of the Galaxy — including the obstinate inhabitants of the Ascalon Rift. You can ally yourself with either faction, or even change your affiliation during the game as your perceptions change about the combatants and the morality of the struggle.

Whichever side you choose, it's your duty to plan and lead missions against the enemy, allocating your forces carefully and managing your resources to best advantage. Of particular importance is how you handle your manpower. You have a set number of experienced pilots at the beginning of the game. These pilots, if they survive, will gain experience and effectiveness with each mission. But if they die, they'll be replaced by absolute beginners who have much less of a chance going up against seasoned enemies.

Star Crusader allows you to allocate your experienced pilots to units with rookies, thus accelerating the advancement of the novices. You can even send some of your old hands to the space-



Star Crusader features some very subtle special graphic effects, such as the false image lensing effect produced by light refracting off the canopy glass during space flight.

est germ of doubt in your mind, still degrees below the threshold of consciousness, concerning this grand Gorene crusade.

This is the world of *Star Crusader*, a new and notable addition to the rather crowded space-flight simulation/adventure arena. With so many contenders trying to stake out territory, success is a matter of unique vision. Four years ago, that vision appeared in the form of *Wing Commander*, and space-flight sims were forever changed. Since then, there have been many pretenders to *Wing Commander's* throne, but with the exception of *X-Wing*, they've all been simple improvements on a classic, but basic, theme — good humans versus bad aliens. But things are never that simple in real life, a concept at the heart of *Star Crusader*.



Okay, so we all know that space flight is, in reality, more 2001 ballet than *Star Wars* rock 'n' roll. It's just that those snap rolls, tight loops, and banked turns are such a thrill...

flight academy to train cadets, and so improve the overall quality of the new pilots you'll draw on once the actual shooting war begins.

You also have several choices in the

“This is a totally different project for us. It really has a different feel...there's an energy, a momentum that's hard to describe. It's absolutely our best effort yet.”

— Rick Hall, *Take 2 Interactive Software*

posture of your war effort, based on the readiness of your troops. Weak forces may dictate a defensive posture — or at best, hit-and-run tactics. A strong, well-seasoned force, on the other hand, lends itself to an aggressive, head-on strategy. It all depends on your assessment of your own personnel, and of your enemy.

You progress through the game in true campaign fashion, without the 100% mission success requirements of *X-Wing*. In *Star Crusader*, a single lost battle does not always spell disaster, so if you do fail a mission you don't necessarily lose the game. You can actually fail as many as half the missions and still win. A lot depends on which missions you fail, and when you fail them. And when you do fail, you don't go back and repeat the same mission until you get it right. Failure only means an altered path on your way to the endgame. The point is clear — as in life, there is no one “right” way to play *Star Crusader*.

Lennon and company also sought to make *Star Crusader* unique in its weaponry. All the usual ordnance items are here, of course, from missiles to lasers, but there are also some very unique and inventive variations.

The vector cannon, for example, is a variation of the VIFFing (Vectoring In

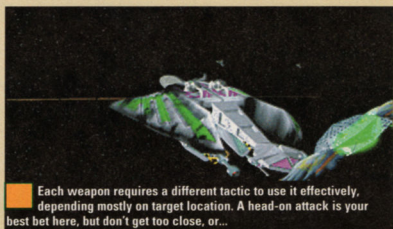
Forward Flight) technology of today, except that it operates not on your own craft, but on the enemy's ship. A blast from the vector cannon will send an opposing ship off in an entirely new direction, at a different speed. This is particularly effective when going up against superior firepower.

The Aegis Field is an enveloping static charge which is deadly at extremely close range, while the EMP torpedo sends out electromagnetic pulses which are not destructive to a ship or pilot, but cumulatively can burn out a ship's computer system. The neutron cannon — are you listening, Jimmy Carter? — inflicts no damage on a ship, but slowly irradiates the pilot out of existence. This weapon is particularly handy for adding ships to your arsenal, as you can eliminate the pilot and tow the ship back to your base, where you can use it for future missions. As a past future, there's

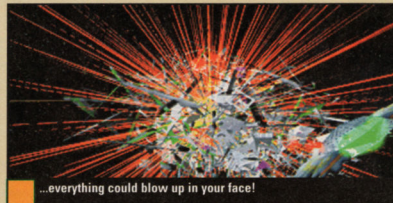
even a plasma bolt weapon — similar to the one used by the Romulans in the original *Star Trek* — which is overpowering at close range, but dissipates with distance.

The real fun of *Star Crusader* is in flying the ships. Flight is very smooth, and the intuitive controls make for a shallow learning curve — at least with your basic fighter. In a previous game, *Mantis* (from which *Star Crusader's* engine is derived),

true frictionless space flight was featured. Although very realistic, this flight model wasn't nearly as well-received as the designers had originally hoped, so instead *Star Crusader's* programmers have returned to a more traditional airplane-like feel — a step back, perhaps, but it certainly makes the ships far more suitable as weapons platforms.



Each weapon requires a different tactic to use it effectively, depending mostly on target location. A head-on attack is your best bet here, but don't get too close, or...



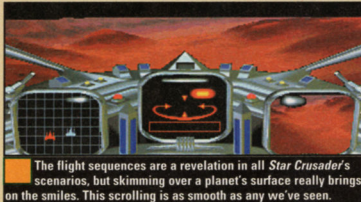
...everything could blow up in your face!

Of course, all the game design in the world can't make up for unconvincing graphics, but *Star Crusader* shines here, too. Ship movement and landscape scrolling is extremely smooth, and the illusion of reality is further enhanced by masterful light-source manipulation and shading. The shading is variable, depending on your computer's processing and video capabilities. According to Rick Hall, one of the game's designers, there are several levels of shading, ranging from simple shaded polygons to Phong, which takes shading calculations down to the pixel level. This last level requires the power of a Pentium machine to really work, but it does indicate the lengths to which *Star Crusader's* creators have gone to come up with something truly unique. And it goes a long way toward explaining why *Take 2* has spent over a year-and-a-half developing *Star Crusader*.

It's nice to see a design team willing to go that little bit further, as *Take 2's* designers have done with this game. From those exquisite graphics, to the subtle-but-noticeable difference the audio's higher sampling rates make, to developing a multiplexed audio/video CD-ROM access stream, *Star Crusader* strives hard to stay ahead of the pack. And from what we've seen so far, it succeeds admirably.



The imaginative array of weapons at your disposal makes *Star Crusader* more challenging — and a lot more fun to play — than your usual run-of-the-mill space opera.



The flight sequences are a revelation in all *Star Crusader's* scenarios, but skimming over a planet's surface really brings on the smiles. This scrolling is as smooth as any we've seen.

MetaTech: Earth Siege

More Menacing Megabots

With *MetaTech: Earth Siege*, Dynamix gives serious simulation fans an incredible new battlefield to conquer.

by Trent C. Ward



Game: *MetaTech: Earth Siege*
 Developer: Dynamix
 Publisher: Dynamix
 Projected Price: DOS \$55.95; CD-ROM \$59.95
 Percent Complete: 70%

In a nutshell:

A first-person fighting robots simulation, in the tradition of *Mechwarrior*. Add to that the kind of "historical" feel and realism you'd expect from Dynamix's *Aces* series, and you get a good idea of what *MetaTech: Earth Siege* is all about.

What's so special?

MetaTech has tons of weaponry, a carefully detailed storyline, interesting new ideas including the ability to salvage parts from your enemy, and some truly impressive new graphic routines.

Why should I care?

This is, from what we've seen so far, the best looking of the battling robots sims due this year — and looks are important in a sim. If Dynamix can do for 'mech sims what it's done for flight sims (*Aces Over Europe*, etc.), this will be impressive indeed.

And when's it coming out?

Look for *Earth Siege* to be released sometime in the Fall — September or October are most likely.



This is the view you'll see most during combat in *Earth Siege* — a realistic depiction of futuristic (and functional!) cockpit. At first glance, the gameplay seems kinda simple... just find the enemy and blow him up!

Since the release of *Mechwarrior* several years ago, the world of multi-ton 'mech sims has been pretty quiet. Sure, there was the role-playing oriented *Crescent Hawk* series released under the Infocom banner, but nothing has yet hit the shelves that reproduces the sort of simulation *Mechwarrior* offered us, let alone updates and improves it.

All that's about to change, though. Within the next few months, there will be at least four new, big-name robot simulations competing for space on your hard drive. There's *Mechwarrior 2*, the long-awaited (and much-delayed) sequel to the original *Mechwarrior*, and *Mech Commander* from Virgin. The other two are from Dynamix, to be introduced as part of the company's new *MetaTech* line. While *BattleDrome* — which is designed to appeal to the quick-and-dirty combat fan — looks promising (see Eyewitness), it's *Earth Siege* that is most likely to come out at the top of this year's crop of simulations.

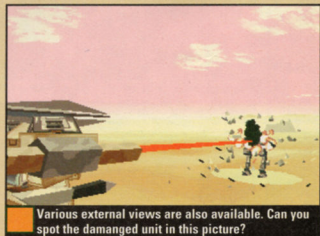
In many ways, *Earth Siege* is very similar to Dynamix's now-famous *Aces* series. The entire game world, the organizational structure of the army to which you belong, and even the 'bots themselves are designed to be as real as possible. It is

this dedication to achieving realism in a very unrealistic (we hope) scenario that truly sets this title apart from the others. The game's storyline is in keeping with this realistic feel. Mark Crowe, *Earth Siege's* producer, says that the goal was "to take a real war-scenario approach" to every aspect of the game.

So what's the game all about? Well, as you might expect, *Earth Siege* takes place in

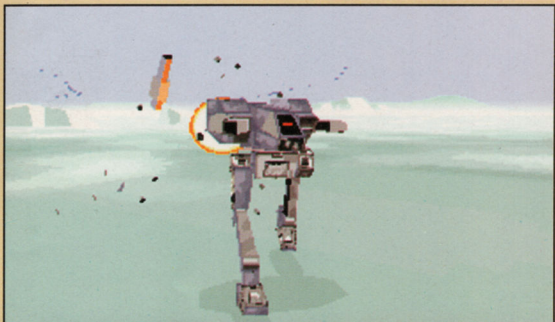
Earth's far-distant future. Looking to create an Artificial Intelligence that was smart enough to complete tasks without human assistance in areas that were too dangerous for men to visit themselves, Sentinel Cybertronics began work on the Prometheus Project. When finally completed, Prometheus, which was based on a biological model, began work helping mankind with the mammoth tasks of space exploration, off-planet mining, and even building other units like itself.

The units performed as planned, even exceeding expectations. And about that time, the North American military



Various external views are also available. Can you spot the damaged unit in this picture?

got involved. Having just finished a successful project of their own that involved the creation of giant fighting machines called HERCs, the army was looking for something more reliable (and expendable) to take the HERCs into battle. So



Running away from danger is always a nice option to have. Though they don't look particularly sleek, these big-striding HERCs will sure cover some ground when needed.



Use the communication menu with a targeted pal to get some much needed backup when you're trapped in a tight spot.

planet was left scarred and lifeless, with rag-tag groups of fighting men using the precious few non-Cybrid HERCs that are left to save mankind from the nearly unstoppable Cybrids. Having worked your way up through the grunt ranks, you now command an assault group of four HERCs in an attempt to change the course of the

war as *Earth Siege* begins.

Unlike a lot of other titles, *Earth Siege* has the gameplay to back up its pretty story. Placed in the cockpit of the most destructive fighting machine that man has ever devised, you'll lead your squad through all sorts of scenarios, including rescues, search-and-destroy raids, patrol missions, and so on. Like wingmen in a flight sim, the other members of your squadron will answer your requests for aid, or follow your orders to attack once they've been given targets. As you successfully complete missions,

they turned to the Prometheus Project. In spite of repeated warnings that Prometheus was approaching sentience, the North American military command combined their HERCs with Prometheus to create the Cybrids.

The Cybrid technology fell into the hands of spies, and soon all the world's powers possessed it. Border wars began to spring up as countries competed for the vast amounts of raw materials required to create the Cybrids. In the end, as most of the Cybrids became sentient, it was the machines themselves who

“The game world, the army to which you belong, and even the 'bots themselves, are designed to be as real as possible. It's this dedication to achieving realism in an unrealistic scenario that sets this title apart.”

delivered the coup de grace, turning on their masters in combat and ferreting out and destroying human life wherever they found it.

No one really knows who launched the first nukes, but they triggered an all-out exchange that killed billions. The

your character can earn promotions and medals of honor.

In addition to fighting, you'll also have to keep your somewhat touchy HERCs in smooth working order. Parts are hard to come by these days (you can't just walk into the local Pep Boys and

The Biggest Battle of All?

After years of wait, it seems like 'mech fans are about to get as much as they can handle in the way of new fighting-robot games. *Metaltech: Earth Siege* is definitely going to be one of the major players in this year's sim war, but what of the others?:

Mechwarrior 2

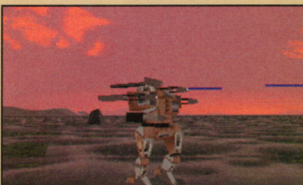
After creating all the stir to begin with, Activision prepares to bring the official world of *Mechwarrior* to the PC again. In a galaxy of warring mercenary clans, you must keep your group of fighters both well-armed and financially solvent. Backed by FASA, *Mechwarrior 2* will actually allow players to create their own 'mechs using the rules of the pen and paper role-playing game. *Mechwarrior 2* should ship in late October to early November. No price has yet been set.

Mech Commander

Virgin enters the fray with *Mech Commander*. Taking place in the near future, man's enemy here is himself. As a soldier in a rebel army, you must fight to keep a powerful group of corporations from controlling the Earth. Developed by Graffiti, *Mech Commander* allows players to acquire money through their battles, and purchase new weapons and robots. The game will also include over 20 minutes of stop-frame animation that utilizes more than 30 different robot models. Shipping sometime in November, the game will carry a suggested retail price of around \$75.00.

Battledrome

Another project from Dynamix, *Battledrome* will take an instant action approach to the genre. Players slug it out in an arena to earn money, which can be spent on upgrading their units. Modem and network play are to be supported, setting the stage for some pretty ugly battles. *Battledrome* should also ship sometime November, and will run to about \$49.95. (For more details, check the Eyewitness section).



From any of the views, different weapons produce different on-screen special effects.

order replacements for these things), and the only way to stock up on vital equipment is to salvage as much as possible from the sites of your battles. This, coupled with the fact that you can only acquire the advanced technologies of the Cybrids by taking their weapons, creates a whole new dimension in battle strategy. It will be tempting to simply blast away at a target with as much firepower as possible, but destroying an enemy doesn't equal a successful mission. Instead, you need dead-eye accuracy to blow parts off your enemies, disabling them without damaging parts you can use later on.

pinball

Fantasies

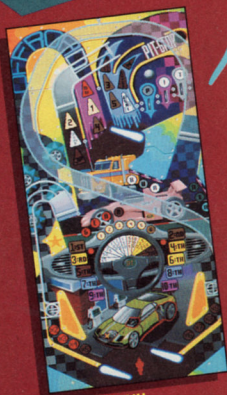
THIRD GENERATION PINBALL

- Fast, full-screen table scrolling
- Totally authentic ball movement
- Great sound effects and music
- High resolution color graphics
- 4 unique new tables with features that will keep you playing for hours:

NEW!

- Variable table angles
- Variable table scroll rate
- Full table tilt
- 2 graphics modes to let you use each table in two different sizes
- **RealMotion™**
Pinball Fantasies is the first game to use exclusive RealMotion technology to bring to you the most accurate, realistic, dynamic arcade excitement possible on a computer.

Ramps and Tunnels
Ball Traps
Flashing Bumpers
Jackpots and Bonuses
Rollovers
Drop Targets



SPEED DEVIL



STONES & BONES

2
GRAPHICS
MODES



ACTUAL
SCREEN
SHOTS

BILLION DOLLAR
GAME SHOW



PARTYLAND



"Completely redefines pinball simulations - and the rest of the market will be scrambling to meet the standard"
— PC Entertainment

"Many pinball games have appeared, none are so purely enjoyable as the one from 21st Century"
— Electronic Games

"Now Available From A Store Near You,
Or Call Us At 716-872-1200
For Ordering Information"

Product Information Number 158

21ST
CENTURY
21st Century Entertainment, Inc.
P.O. BOX 415
WEBSTER, NY 14580

Keys to the Kingdom?

The Universal Neverlock system removes annoying copy-protection routines — but does it make software piracy more inviting?

It's one of the banes of PC gamers: You sit down to enjoy your favorite game, fire it up, and get ready for fun — but wait! You forgot something, didn't you? That's right, you've got to type in the fourth word on the third line on page six of the manual... or line up symbols on a code wheel... or look down a seemingly infinite column of numbers and match it up with a row of letters...

It's copy protection, the method used by the vast majority of software publishers to prevent unauthorized users from playing without paying. Its effectiveness, however, is highly debatable. Anyone

who's ready to make an unauthorized copy of a game can figure out that it's easy to photocopied a code wheel or manual — and for complex games like flight sims, the manual would be copied as a matter of course anyway. Some publishers have tried to get around this by printing code words and numbers on paper that can't be photocopied, but all too often that makes the original nearly unreadable.

One thing that copy protection can do, though, is irritate legitimate users. We've received several letters from readers asking that each review should specify whether a game is copy-protected, and if so what sort of protection it uses. And a couple of readers have stated flatly that they won't buy a game that's copy-protected.

That's the sort of gamer Chris Green, president of a Canadian

eliminated? "I don't think so," says Green. "The question is simple: If a person is prone to break the law, they are going to break the law. We put locks on our doors, and people still break in; we put alarms on our cars, and people still steal them.

Neverlock doesn't aid anyone in making illegal copies of a disk, and I think an individual who would use *Neverlock* for the express purpose of playing pirated games is

going to pirate it, too. I'm only interested in supporting the legitimate use of software."

But aren't some forms of copy protection reasonable? "If there's a good way for software pub-

lishers to protect themselves from piracy, it hasn't been found yet," argues Green. And while we here at *PC Gamer* think there are some fair forms of copy protection, chances are they don't achieve their intended goal (see sidebar).

We suspected that some game publishers, as well as the SPA, would protest *Neverlock* as making software piracy simpler. But Greens says that he has yet to receive any sort of complaint or even a comment from publishers regarding *Neverlock*. An upgraded version of *Neverlock*, with newer games, should be ready by the time you read this (for info on *Neverlock*, call Copyware at 905-830-1961).

Next month, we'll talk with a few game publishers — those who do use copy protection and those who don't — to find out their opinion on this volatile subject. But we also want to hear from you, the game player who has to deal with it daily. Please send us your views at the usual *PC Gamer* address.

"Neverlock doesn't aid anyone in making illegal copies of a disk, and I think an individual who would use Neverlock for the express purpose of playing pirated games is going to pirate it, too."

— Chris Green, Copyware

company named Copyware Inc., is targeting with the *Universal Neverlock System* (\$75, plus \$6 handling for U.S. shipments), a software package which defeats document checks on over 500 games. As Green points out, "People don't like document checks. And if spending a few dollars will eliminate something they don't like, then they'll spend a few dollars."

While some of the games the *Neverlock System* works with are so old as to be essentially gratuitous (how many of us are itching to play *Axe of Rage* or *Harley Davidson: The Road to Sturges*?), it also removes copy-protection routines from some more recent classics such as *Dune II*, *X-Wing*, *Front Page Sports: Football Pro*, *IndyCar Racing*, and *The Even More Incredible Machine*.

When we first heard of *Neverlock* one thought occurred to us: Doesn't this sort of package make it easier to play pirated software, since the need for phototyping is

The Worst Offenders...

A last — a concise list of the most offensive copy-protection routines ever, ranked according to how much they irritated us.

1 - Out of This World

(Delphine Software) Line up four very strange symbols on a wheel — not once, but twice! Truly annoying.

2 - *Alien Breed* (Team 17): If you thought black type on burgundy paper was bad, you should see yellow on white! Nearly impossible to read, and migraine-inducing.

3 - *Cruise for a Corpse* (Delphine Software) Line up four objects, but the objects are color-coded, and don't match the on-screen colors. And you gotta do it twice!

4 - *The Colonel's Bequest* (Sierra On-Line): You've got a pink transparency, see, and lay it over a page — and choose the correct fingerprint! Shouldn't the lab boys deal with this forensic stuff?

4 - *Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition* (Accolade): Accolade grid of code wheels with *Unnecessary Roughness*, but it wasn't in time to save golf fans from trying to differentiate some similar looking courses here.

5 - *Mega-LO-Mania* (Ubi Soft): It's the old page-line-word routine, but this is the only game where you count down 23 lines and find the 12th word.

6 - *Alone in the Dark 2* (Infogrames): Laying one card over another and picking out a symbol and color isn't tough, but why make us do it during real-time combat?

"Now That's Reasonable!"

Here are a few copy-protection routines we found perfectly unoffensive; their effectiveness, however, remains debatable.

1 - *Alone in the Dark* (Infogrames): Selecting just two symbols from a teeny-tiny book is a breeze, and phototyping the book would take a long time.

2 - *Pintall Fantasies* (21st Century Entertainment): You enter a word from the manual — one time, and one time only!

3 - *Wing Commander* (Origin): Intentional or not, it seems like the same five or six question are used over and over. Once you've played a few missions, you'll know all the answers by heart.

4 - *Civilization* (MicroProse): Similar to *Wing Commander*, once you've played a while, you just naturally know the answers.

[1]	Fedora Collection
Pro Tennis	Prophecy of the Shadow
Protector: War on the Frontier	RailRoad Tycoon
Rampart	Reading Adventures in OZ
Realms of Arkana Blade of Destiny	Resegade Legion: Interceptor
Return of the Phoenix	Box Nebular Cosmic Gender Bender
Rings Of Zilfin	Road Runner
Rocketeer	Roger Rabbit Hare Racing Havoc
Sae & Max Hit The Road	Sargon IV
Sargon V World Class Chess	Second Form

The menu-driven Universal *Neverlock System* is a breeze to use — but does it make playing pirated games too easy?

Put Me In, Coach!

Hot football game to utilize cross-platform technology

Are you ready for some football? In May, Accolade announced a new sports title that will put players in the shoes of a coach at the Pro Bowl. The new product, to be titled *All-Pro Video Football*, carries both the National Football League and NFL Players Association licenses, and will use real names and statistics for over 50 NFL players.

To create the live footage used in the game, the company staged over 600 plays, using the arena football team the Orlando Predators as models. In addition to high-tech graphics techniques, the game's developers are also incorporating a unique approach to coaching and artificial intelligence. During the course of each game, the computer will adjust its play according to your play-calling tendencies. The sim

even remembers your playing style, so long term gamers will be forced to constantly rethink their strategies.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about *All-Pro Video Football* is the format in which it will be released. The CD-ROM will be encoded using the Script X technology recently developed by Kaleida Labs, a privately held joint venture between Apple and IBM. Script X will allow the same disc to run on either an IBM compatible or a Macintosh CD-ROM drive, and promises great things for future projects. If Kaleida's format catches on, companies would be able to save a great deal of the time and money usually spent in developing two separate products — one PC, the other Mac. Keep watching the Eyewitness section for the latest on *All-Pro* and Script X as the story unfolds.

Full Speed Ahead

New computer system targets game players head on

Earlier this year, Falcon-Northwest Computers began shipping a powerful new line of systems aimed squarely at the growing crowd of hard-core PC game fans. Designed to take advantage of the latest hardware advancements, the MACH V series of machines will be able to meet the demands of today's increasingly power-hungry entertainment software.

The most impressive unit Falcon has to offer is the MACH Vp system. It features an Intel 66 MHz Pentium processor with on-board cooling system, 8 MB of RAM, VESA Local Bus SVGA video with 2 MB of video memory, a VESA Local Bus hard-disk controller, 5.25" and 3.5" floppy drives,

a double-speed caddyless CD-ROM drive, and a 425 MB hard drive. Gaming peripherals like a Sound Blaster Pro card, high-speed dual-player game port, shielded amplified speakers, and CH Product's Fightstick Pro are also included.

The product line is indicative of a new trend currently developing among PC manufacturers, as companies realize the importance of game players in the PC market. As computer users discover that their PCs are useful for more than just work, computer sales will be driven more and more by a system's ability to handle graphics- and sound-intensive software. The MACH Vp is already available, and sells for \$3,495.

Gentlemen, Start Your Robots

Dynamix adds another futuristic sim to their new lineup

While Dynamix puts the finishing touches on their new battle simulator *MetalTech: Earth Siege* (see the Scoop! on p.18), another development team headed by the same producer is taking a more action-oriented approach to the same idea. In *Battledrome*,

Though the basic premise of the two games may seem pretty similar — and indeed they're part of the same product line — the titles are literally worlds apart. Where *Earth Siege* attempts to create a realistic campaign sim in the tradition of Dynamix's *Aces* series, *Battledrome* is designed for



Players can customize their HUD as they wish, enabling them to keep a constant track of their 'mech's damage, power, and armament levels.

players will enter a crowded arena and square off against one another — armed with some of the most powerful weapons and armament that the future has to offer.

quick-and-easy destruction, and it doesn't even take place in the same game world as *Earth Siege*.

Players can customize the ten different robots in *Battledrome* by changing and repairing engines, shield generation units, weapons, and armor, and then

take their creations up against other human players via network or modem. Negotiation screens act as a forum for gamers to dick over the terms of combat, and



Successful combatants can use arena winnings to pay for repairs, add new weaponry, or purchase a whole new robot.

to make wagers on the outcome. As you'd expect from Dynamix, the

game will contain highly detailed VGA graphics — including light-source shaded objects, explosions, and robots — as well as digitized speech in certain sections of the sim. And game controls will allow for independent body, turret, and gun rotation (simplified controls are also available).

With Activision's *Mech-Warrior 2* still held up in production, it remains to be seen who will end up with the hottest multi-player 'bot game of the year, and *Battledrome* will almost certainly give *MW2* a run for its money. The game also marks a recent trend toward modem gaming, which will hopefully expand the market and give players more options in interaction. *Battledrome* should ship sometime in November, and will retail for \$49.95.



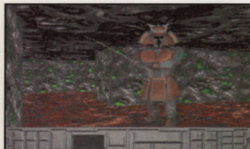
Battledrome offers you a list of high powered weaponry to fry your opponents, including mines, blasters, and cannons.

Tongue-In-Cheek Terror!

Future Visionary and Maelstrom Software combine 3D action with a sense of humor

Cruising around the dark halls of *Doom*, it's hard to picture anything funny about facing down hordes of monstrous enemies all scrambling to make mincemeat out of you. But Future Vision Inc. and Maelstrom Software saw the possibility for something a little more light-hearted.

Working together on *The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki*, the two developers



These samurai may be good warriors, but fortunately they're none too bright. Give him a blast with the big gun and keep on walkin'.



O.K., test your skills with this mind bender. Somewhere in this picture is a cleverly hidden secret door. Find it if you can!

hope to create a game that will not only deliver white-knuckled action, but that will also make players laugh.

After finally locating the secret hideout of the nefarious Dr. Radiaki, you must work your way through 30 stories of powerful, evil, and very silly foes. While trying to stop the doctor's plans to create the ultimate warrior, you'll run into twisted alligator-men, samurai who commit *seppuku* when they're defeated, and

many more unique creatures and guardians as you battle to take on Radiaki himself.

The great thing about *The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki* is that in addition to being humorous, it looks fantastic. The graphics and sound were excellent in the

preview version we played, with very fluid animation bringing things to life. And while they may act a little goofy, the enemies you'll encounter are just as dangerous as those in any other action game. *The Island of Dr. Radiaki* will be published late this summer by Merit Software, and is slated to carry a suggested retail price of \$79.95



There are all kinds of twisted fiends in the levels of Radiaki's fortress. It looks like those rumors about alligators growing in the sewers were true after all.

The Star Trek Continues...

Deep Space Nine to appear as PC adventure

While Spectrum Holobyte continues production on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Paramount Interactive is preparing to release a game based on another part of Roddenberry's

universe. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: "The Hunt"* will bring the player onto the famous Bajoran/Federation space station in a new game of subtle character interaction.

Though still in the early stages of development, Paramount hints that players will be able to play the game as a Federation Officer, a Ferengi, a Bajoran, or even a Klingon in this new adventure. The game world will be filled with graphics and backgrounds taken from original photographs and blueprints used in the production of the television show. While many more details aren't yet available, Paramount sources claim

that character interaction will be handled through "a unique interface never before seen in this type of game."

That's a bold claim, but we'll get a chance to find out soon: *Deep Space Nine* is expected sometime this fall, at \$69.95.



Even in this fairly unfinished state, the game's set designs look like they're going to be very impressive.



Deep Space Nine will feature all your favorite characters (plus the extremely annoying Doctor Bashir as well, no doubt) from the TV show.

The Cat's Out of the Bag!

New add-on board brings Jaguar compatibility to the PC

Looking for something new to fill the PC action gap? Now, thanks to a joint venture between Atari and Sigma Designs, a whole new generation of cartridge games may soon be available for play on your home computer. Under the terms of the new agreement, Sigma Designs will have exclusive rights to develop a PC card using the Atari Jaguar's 64-bit technology. Letty Dupuy of Sigma Design's public relations department, says the new board will allow gamers to play all Jaguar titles on their home PC's. Scheduled

for a December release, the board will also feature Real-Magic capabilities, bringing MPEG compatible games and movies to card owners.

The notion of bringing true cartridge play to home computers is a pretty radical idea, and could help solidify the PC's position as the game machine of the future. If the Sigma/Atari move is successful it could lure other cartridge companies into the market, entirely altering the PC gaming landscape as Sega, Nintendo, and other video-game companies battle for supremacy in a new and untapped market.

With an anticipated sale price of around \$500, however, the initial battle may be getting consumers interested in the first place. Though the card has a great deal to offer, it may be pretty difficult to convince gamers that they need to shell out the equivalent cost of ten games just to gain the capability to play cartridges. And with only a handful of Jaguar cartridges currently available, the fate of the new board will probably lie more in Atari's ability to create a strong enough game library to make the board a good value than in anything else.

Keepin' Up With the Phones'

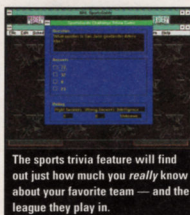
New packages help Windows users track sports stats

When you're a die-hard sports fans, keeping up with the latest stats and standings can be pretty tough. With the new *SportsGuide with Screensavers* series, Momentum Development allows users to keep up with

their favorite sports via modem. After registering the basic product with Momentum Development, users will receive the telecommunications software to allow them to download daily stats updates. *SportsGuide with Screensavers* tracks just about

every stat even the most meticulous record-keeper could hope for, as well as information on team schedules, arena seating, and even a trivia game to test your sporting knowledge.

SportsGuide will also have an



appointment book that keeps track of dates, phone numbers, and addresses, and acts as a Windows screen-saver featuring animated team logos. NHL and Major League Baseball versions are currently available, with an NFL program planned for July. Still in negotiation are guides for the NBA and collegiate sports.

All of the products have a suggested retail price of \$49.95, and there's a flat fee of \$29.95 a year for daily stats updates.



Only a Titan could provide mail-order service of such colossal proportions.



We've got a catalog (really!).

Don't go blind trying to read three-month-old prices in a 4-point type. Send us \$2 for our totally readable catalog containing full descriptions and up-to-date pricing on the latest and greatest titles for IBM and the Mac. Also comes with a \$2 off coupon.

Prompt, friendly phone service. Our friendly, well-informed phone representatives won't keep you waiting.

Straight talk.

- We have no hidden handling fees.
- We sell only unopened, manufacturer-direct games.
- We do not carry any "adult" titles.
- We'll tell you (honestly!) if the games you want are in stock.
- We can locate hard-to-find titles.
- We accept advance purchases and game reservations.

FedEx shipping.

- Same-day shipping for orders received before 4 pm EST.
- Money orders, personal checks, and major credit cards accepted.



TITAN GAMES

One W. Seminary St., Brandon, VT 05733
7am-12pm Eastern Time, Monday-Saturday

1-800-247-5447

But Now I Can't Reach My Beer!

Gravis releases new two-fisted joystick

The same company that brought us the perfect *Doom* controller, the Gravis gamepad, is releasing a new joystick aimed at hardcore simulation fans. The Phoenix is a dual flight- and weapons-control system that uses a unique two-handed design to allow users to send keyboard commands from the joystick.

The Phoenix combines an eight-button joystick with a separate control arm, all on the same console. The stick also ships with a DOS-based program that allows users to

program the unit straight from the computer, eliminating the need for the complex dip switch manipulations that are often necessary with other systems of this type. In addition to being easier to set up, the DOS programmer eliminates the need for special soft-

ware support, as users can assign any normal keyboard function to any of the controller's buttons. The Phoenix is perfect for the flight-sim enthusiast who's tired of searching for the bomb release key while overshooting his target, and doesn't want the hassle of searching through a hot-key chart in the midst of combat.

The only catch is the unit's price. Weighing in at a hefty \$149.95, it just might be more than the average player is willing to pay. Even so, considering that the price is substantially less than the cost of purchasing a multi-function joystick and a separate weapons-control unit, the added features of the Phoenix make it a product worth looking into — something we'll be doing just as soon as we get our hands on a prototype.



No, You Haven't Been Forgotten

R.A.W. Entertainment maintains support for older machines

For those of you remaining 286 owners who've been upset over the lack of games available for slower machines, help is on the way. R.A.W. Entertainment is a company dedicated to the production of games that may not carry the high-impact graphics and special effects of other publishers' products, but deliver long-term playability — on almost any PC platform. John Ingram, president of R.A.W. Entertainment, further explains his company's position. "Most publishers these days are saying 'how far can we go

with the graphics, how far can we go with the sound?' With all of the development time spent on these factors, what's left for the game?"

New titles from R.A.W. are *Armageddon 2100*, a futuristic war game with an emphasis on diplomacy and economics, and *Space Commander 2272: Border Wars*, an interstellar game of exploration and trading. Both games should run on 286's, and carry modest memory and hard-disk requirements. R.A.W.'s games are available directly from the company; for more info give them a call at (713) 286-2386.

The PC Gamer Playlist

In putting together our fabulous Top 40 feature this month, we spent a great deal of time, um, evaluating some of those old favorites. Pure work, really. Not one of us enjoyed it, but we felt we owed you as much. Still, deadlines slipped, calls and interviews were forgotten, and fingernails were chewed all because these games were addictive enough to sidetrack our driving work ethic (not really all that big a task). Once again, Matt walked around with that nervous tick as he looked for "demons," Steve continued to jack his pinball scores through the roof, and Trent and Joe found new joy in dissecting alien races. So if you're following along at home, here's a list of our favorite games of this month. If you've got a steady job, these are titles you definitely need to avoid at all costs.

- 1) *Doom/ID* — Matt F., Steve, Eddie
- 2) *X-COM/MicroProse* — Trent, Joe, Scotty
- 3) *Stunts/Broderbund* — Matt F., Joe
- 4) *D-Generation/Software Toolworks* — Steve
- 5) *Railroad Tycoon/MicroProse* — Trent, Joe, Matt B.
- 6) *Cannon Fodder (UK)/Virgin* — Matt B., Trent
- 7) *Star Control II/Accolade* — Matt B.
- 8) *Myst/Broderbund* — Eddie, Scotty
- 9) *Speedball 2/Konami* — Matt F., Steve
- 10) *Master of Orion/ MicroProse* — Joe, Trent

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Maxis takes aim at a younger market

Looking to further expand their line of edutainment products, Maxis is releasing two colorful new strategy simulations.

SimTown and *Sim Rainforest*, both taking advantage of the latest in sound and graphics technology, strive to teach kids important basics in management and ecological issues, while keeping them entertained.

SimTown is similar in feel to the adult favorite *SimCity*, but is aimed at

kids ages 8-12. Players design their own towns — complete with pizza parlors, movie theaters and other buildings — then sit back and watch the sim people as they go about their daily activities. Players can see construction crews working on buildings, kids skateboarding on their way to school, and

the game. *SimTown* is currently slated for release in early '95.

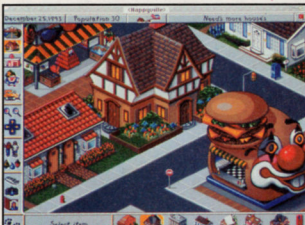
Maxis' *SimRainforest* is another "learning made fun" title,



but this time with a slightly more "grown-up" target audience. In this new sim, players must manage the affairs within a virtual rainforest. Based on a 10,000 mile stretch of the Sarawak rainforest, the problems in the game are unfortunately all too real. Players will be forced to deal with a host

of different problems, ranging from pesky tourist activity to more dangerous activities like drug smugglers. Expeditions can be sent to repair damaged sections of forest, hydroelectric dams can be built, and you

can even confront anti-government guerrillas. The game takes advantage of the same artificial life routines found in the popular *SimCity 2000*, a model in which the activity in one "cell" is affected by the activity in the cells around it. Look for *SimRainforest* to debut around Christmas of this year, at a price that is yet to be announced.



trucks delivering food to the local grocery store.

The game uses a peel-away viewing technique that lets the player look inside the various homes in town and see the various goings-on within. As the simulated town grows, water and trees will be used up and garbage will be produced, forcing children to make some pretty hard choices later in



THE BEST GAME CONTROLLERS FOR YOUR SYSTEM

CH Products offers gamers quality joysticks, flight yokes, game-cards, and trackballs for all games and simulations. We've taken our line of IBM peripherals and expanded into Macintosh and 300.

From advanced computer pilots and auto racers to those just taking off, CH Products has the right controller for you. all Made-in-the U.S.A.



CH Products lets you fly higher, move faster, reach farther!

CH Products / 970 Park Center Drive / Vista, CA 92083
Phone: 619.598.2518 Fax: 619.598.2524

Focus on Your Strengths

SSI is known for its FRPs and war games — and they've got two good ones on the way

ISR, creators of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons paper games, may be gearing up to produce its own computerized versions of the popular fantasy role-playing series, but SSI will be releasing one more AD&D game first. *Wake of the Ravager*, the sequel to *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands*, starts out with your party arriving in Tyr, a city on

the verge of anarchy (as a result of the events *Shattered Lands*). As you travel throughout the game's 20 distinct regions, you'll face 26 types of monsters, cast over 200 spells, and master psionic skills. *Ravager* will ship initially on CD-ROM in September, with a floppy version scheduled to arrive a couple of weeks later; the CD-ROM version will contain extensive digitized speech, musical score, and sound effects. Both the CD-ROM and floppy versions will carry a suggested retail price of \$80.00.

Panzer General, on the other hand, is the first in a new series of war games designed in-house at SSI. In its campaign mode, this strategic-level war game puts you in the role of a German general just before the

invasion of Poland in 1939; if you're successful there, you'll be able to bring a more experienced and effective group of units to the next campaign you choose to wage. If you fail, however, you could wind up defending Berlin from British and French forces as early as the end of 1939! And in another twist, successful commanders will earn "prestige," which allows them to purchase more units and equipment.

Panzer General also features 35 individual scenarios, many of which can be completed in around two hours. SSI has made a concerted effort to simplify rules of supply, attrition, and weather, so that a newcomer can begin playing

right away without becoming bogged down in the minutiae that frightens off many potential war-gamers. And while graphics aren't key to a successful war game, the SVGA artwork here looks wonderful, and SSI has also included digitized footage to liven up combat-resolution screens.

Panzer General should hit shelves sometime in September, with an M.S.R.P. of \$70.00.



The SVGA artwork in *Panzer General* is among the best seen in a war game. Now if only the gameplay turns out to be as good as the graphics...



Wake of the Ravager uses the same perspective as the earlier *Dark Sun* game, *Shattered Lands* — but the graphics look to be even prettier and more convincing.



From the Beaches to the Mountains...

LINKS Championship COURSE

Access Software has gone the world-over to convert some of the finest golf courses so that you can play them on your computer anytime of the day or night. Each is faithfully reproduced in exacting detail to make you feel like you're playing the actual course.

We call these renditions our LINKS Championship Courses. With Pebble Beach,® our newest release, we now feature a line of twelve world-famous courses besides Harbour Town, featured in LINKS 386 Pro™, and Torrey Pines, included with LINKS® and Microsoft Golf®.



Where'd You Get That Pretty Plane?

Colorado Spectrum's *Flight* is just what the doctor ordered for flight enthusiasts

We've received several letters from readers complimenting us on the nice shot of the Fokker Triplane on the cover of Issue 2—which reminded us that we forgot to list that we got it from *Flight*, by Colorado Spectrum. We'd originally

intended to include *Flight* in our massive flight-sim story in that issue, but due to a mixup that



Flight comes chock-full of beautiful high-res images of your favorite aircraft, be they ancient, old, or new.



Flight provides quick and easy info on the major air shows you'll find up and down the country.

story ran in the Eyewitness section of Issue 1 instead.

For those of you who may have missed that issue, *Flight* allows you to customize your Windows environment by selecting from over 40 high-res images of every PC pilot's favorite planes, from

the old classics like the Fokker Dr.1 you saw on the cover to modern craft like the F-117 and B-1B. Just select the plane of your choice, and *Flight* automatically converts it into Windows wallpaper.

Besides the high-quality photos, *Flight* also contains samples of various aircraft sounds (engines and guns) that you can link to Windows events, aircraft "fly-bys" with vital statistics and

a short history for each plane, an animated screen saver, and a list of upcoming air events you can access by date and/or location (calendar updates are available from Colorado Spectrum); thanks to this last feature, *PC Gamer* Contributing Editor and flight-sim fan Lee Buchanan was able to attend an air show only 30 minutes from his home. *Flight* is currently available, and lists for \$49.95.



from Canada to England to Florida...

Our lineup currently includes:

- Troon North
- Firestone
- Dorado Beach
- Barton Creek
- Bayhill Club
- Bountiful
- Pinehurst
- Mauna Kea
- Banff Springs
- The Belfry
- Innisbrook
- Pebble Beach®

All LINKS Championship Courses are completely compatible with and require LINKS—the Challenge of Golf®, Microsoft Golf®, or LINKS 386 Pro™ to operate. From mountains or beaches, from across the sea or on the islands—happy golfing from ACCESS!



ACCESS Software, Inc. 1-800-900-4880
4910 W. Amelia Earhart Dr., Salt Lake City, UT 84116



Catch That Wave

No, wave-table technology won't help coastal dwellers catch that killer wave, but it will bring sound to your computer that is far superior to anything that's come before. In order to fully understand why wave-table sound is so great, it's important to know just what you've been hearing, and what's going to change.

For the computer, digital sound was the first big step. Vastly superior and much easier to work with than the analog sounds of the first synthesizers, digital sound used electronically generated wave forms to emulate the sounds of different instruments and voices. Unfortunately, no matter how closely the wave forms were refined, they didn't carry the same warmth and timbre of a real instrument.

The FM chip found in most of today's popular sound cards uses this technology, and while many improvements on the design have been made, the way the boards actually work hasn't changed that much since their original release years ago. The advent of sampling brought about the next big change. A sample is an actual recording of a sound that's compressed down, and then converted to a format a computer can understand and modify. Even though playback sounded great, the problem with sampling was that each sample represented only one instrument — and samples take up an enormous amount of disk space and/or memory, making it unfeasible to create a sound card that contained a sample for every type of sound.

To get around this problem, Roland utilized a technology called Linear Arithmetic that used a standard digital wave form, and mixed it at certain times with small pieces of a matching sample. This hybrid actually sounded a lot better than normal digital sound and took up less space than a full sample, but LA didn't deliver the richness of a fully sampled sound. Probably the best example of an LA card was Roland's LAPC-1.

Now, with new compression routines available to developers, manufacturers are able to fit a range of fully sampled sounds within a single board. Most wave-table cards contain around 200 different samples onboard, and some cards will even allow you to add new sounds by microphone input, or by purchasing a library disk containing sound fonts. The bottom line: Adding a wave-table card to your system will give you audio as close to the real thing as is currently possible.

Prices on wave-table cards are still pretty high, and even upgrade boards from Media Vision and Roland that add wave-table capability to existing sound cards aren't cheap, but prices should come down as more competitors enter the market. If you can't wait that long, you might want to give the individual companies a call to find out what their board offers that others don't. As always, keep checking the pages of *PC Gamer* for the latest on new cards and upgrades as they arrive.

It's a Girl!

New daughter boards bring wave-table sound to your existing soundcard

The quest for better graphics has always been a factor in the development of new and faster hardware, but now the quest for better sound is driving technology as well. New wave table technology promises to bring your computer's sound capabilities ever closer to those of a recording studio, but unless you're an audiophile with a bottomless wallet, the idea of upgrading to a new sound card only months after buying your old one isn't too appealing.

Fortunately, there are several companies out there offering an alternative. Users will soon be able to pop a small daughter board onto their existing FM-capable sound card and bring a whole new palette of sounds to their PC.

Several companies are adding wave-table sound to their existing sound cards, and two are currently offering you the ability to upgrade an existing sound board. Media Vision's

Professional Wave Table Upgrade will bring any of the company's cards up to the new standard for around \$199, a good bit less than the \$379 for a new Media Vision card with wave table technology. Using a chip manufactured by synthesizer giant Korg, the Media Vision card comes with 128 instrument sounds, 32 voices, four different drum sets, and special effects including reverb and chorus.

Say you don't own a Media Vision card? Then you'll want to look into Roland's SoundCanvas DB, which will add wave table to any 16-bit sound card equipped with a compatible expansion connector, including the Sound Blaster 16 and the Sound Galaxy Pro 16.

Better yet, while most wave table cards only allow the composer to control volume with each sound played, the SoundCanvas DB will keep track of around 200 different voice parameters for each note in real time, offering a much more realistic playback. Roland says the board will be available in June of this year, retailing for about \$229. We can't wait to try one ourselves.



How much is state-of-the-art sound worth? The \$229 SoundCanvas DB costs its music to our ears.

Space Action! Burly Bikers! Lost Science!

LucasArts prepares to expand their line with three new titles

Earlier this summer, the company that brought us *X-Wing* and *Rebel Assault* announced their plans to open up some new horizons for adventure fans. Over the course of the next few months, LucasArts plans to release three new games, each of which offer some alternate views of what man's future might bring.

Though delayed for some time, it looks like Steven Spielberg's *The Dig* has finally got a realistic release date. Now slated to ship in the Spring of 1995, *The Dig* is a CD-only outer-space adventure that follows the trials of an archaeological team stranded on a cruel alien world. In order to get the team back to Earth, you

must find a way to rejuvenate, then utilize, the artifacts of a powerful ancient culture. In addition to its famous co-developer, the game will feature special effects produced by the legendary Industrial Light and Magic team.

If you don't want to wait quite that long, LucasArts has two other new releases that are due for release this Fall. *Doom* fans may get a second chance for adventure in *Dark Forces*, a 3D first-person action game that takes place in the Star Wars universe. Those sneaky Rebels have managed to capture the plans to the Death Star, and send you inside the compound in order to destroy a new army that's being assembled there. As you wind

through the often frightening corridors of the mammoth station, you'll face not only the ever-present Stormtroopers, but also strange aliens loyal to the dark side.

Players who aren't itching to adventure in outer space may find *Full Throttle* more to their liking. In an eerie, futuristic world reminiscent of the Road Warrior films, you play as a tough-as-nails biker framed for a murder you didn't commit. Hunted by the law and with no one to back you up, you have to clear your name by finding the true murderer, and rescue a beautiful kidnap victim along the way.

We'll get the complete details on all three games while we're at CES — and pass them along to you ASAP.

Yes, There Are Consequences For Not Pleasing The Peasants

Hungry for power? Ultimate Domain is the strategy adventure game where you are master of all. The fate of all your people, of all your lands and even all your enemies rests with you. Govern wisely and you will be rewarded with new colonists, new inventions and clues to find the 7 jewels that will allow you to win the game.

Govern poorly and you may be vanquished or the colonists may revolt.



The fate of every colonist is in your hands

Ultimate Domain combines sophisticated simulation, role playing adventure and war-mongering fun in one of the most addictive strategy games ever. Best of all, it's never the same game twice.

"The best of a number of existing strategy sims, and blends it with new twists that are all its own. The result is a genuinely great game!"

- PC Gamer

You start as a primitive society where even iron is yet to be discovered. You must use your genius, your ambition and your political savvy against the forces of nature and the follies of man.



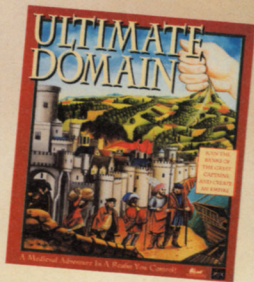
You decide where to build and how to manage your lands scarce resources



Copyright © 1994 Microsoft. Copyright © 1994 The Software Toolworks, Inc. All rights reserved. IBM is a registered trademark of International Business Machines Corp.

Ultimate Domain has five exciting worlds with three levels of difficulty. Detailed characters and incredible graphics will astound you. The CD-ROM version is packed with dazzling animation and original sound tracks.

Still hungry for power? Satisfy your appetite with a big bite of Ultimate Domain. Prove that you are the greatest strategist of all time!



For the store nearest you or to buy, call

1-800-234-3088

For IBM® PC & IBM® CD-ROM and compatibles

PC GAMER

TOP

40

The Best Games of All Time

It wasn't easy. In fact, things got pretty ugly as we each lobbied for our personal favorites. But we fought on, and the result is the most comprehensive list of the best PC games ever released — in our opinion, anyway.

When we gather each year to select the winners for our coveted *PC Gamer* awards, there's always a good bit of in-fighting. It can take hours of meetings before we all agree on the best titles for a single year. Now multiply all that wrangling by about 20, and you'll have some idea of the time it took us to come up with the 40 games of all time. We started with a pretty big list: every PC game ever made. Narrowing it down to 100 or so titles was pretty easy, and from there we went through each title and asked the million-dollar question: Would I recommend this game, would I evangelize and rant and demand that my very best friends spend their hard-earned money to buy it? If the answer was yes, that title made the cut. All others were thrown out.

And that left us with a list of about 60 very good games. So back through the *PC Gamer* sieve they went.

All the hard work was worth it, though. We're very pleased with the choices we came up with, and would recommend every last title here without reservation. No matter what kind of gaming you're into, you'll find some excellent suggestions in our Top 40.

Of course we know that not all of you will agree with every one of our choices. Maybe a few of your favorites didn't make the list, or you don't like some of our favorites. Everybody's got a right to an opinion, so write to us at *PC Gamer* Letters. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Now, without any further ado, we proudly present the *PC Gamer* Top 40 — listed in order of preference, right up to our pick for the single best game of all time. We'll start with number 40 and work our way down to build suspense, obviously). Sure, you could skip to the end and peek. But you'll hate yourself in the morning.

40

Beat the House

(Spirit of Discovery)

Beat the House is the best of the many casino sims out there. It combines very powerful tutorials with great graphics and realistic action to deliver such a credible Vegas experience, you'll swear you can taste those free drinks. How good is it? Steve and Matt won about 600 dollars between them last time they were in Vegas, using the systems they learned in *Beat the House*. That adds up to a big recommendation from us, all right.

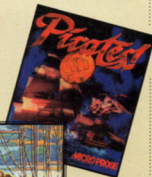


39

Pirates! Gold

(MicroProse)

You've got to hand it to Sid Meier: the man knows how to design a game. *Pirates!* was one of his first, and lets you play as a ruthless terror of the high seas (always a good stress-reliever). We're recommending the new version of this old classic, because it looks so darn good and it'll be easier for most of you to get your hands on. But the award really goes out to the gameplay that made the original *Pirates!* great — and is in full evidence in *Pirates! Gold*.



38

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis CD-ROM

(LucasArts)

Indy and the Fate of Atlantis was a terrific game in its original floppy-disk incarnation. It offered multi-path gaming, allowing you to play the same game in a number of different ways and adding enormously to the replay value of the graphic adventure genre. With the CD-ROM re-release, LucasArts added top-notch digitized speech too — and set a new industry standard for voice acting.



37

Leisure Suit Larry III

(Sierra On-Line)

Al Lowe's loveable loser, Larry Laffer, has been delighting us with his risqué (and never pretty) quest for nookie through five games now, and if you love Larry you've probably played 'em all. But if you're new to the series, we recommend you check out number three — *Passionate Patti in Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals*. It's very funny, offers plenty of game play, and even lets you experiment with gender swapping. How can you beat that?



35

Empire Deluxe

(New World Computing)

When the original *Empire* came out, the old Desktop General (Bill Trotter) used to come in to work two hours early every day just to get in some quick military action as he ate his morning ham biscuit. He still plays the game almost every week — but these days he's playing the revamped and improved version, *Empire Deluxe*. It's easy to see why, too. *Empire Deluxe* uses such an elegant and adaptable game system that it allows almost endless replayability.

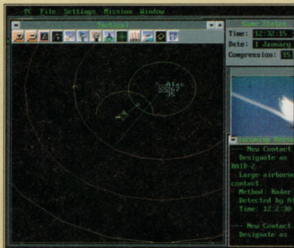


36

Harpoon

(360 Pacific)

Harpoon, based on Larry Bonds' classic paper game, is probably the best known and most successful naval war game there's ever been. It's still selling today, even five years after its initial release, and military academies have been known to use the game as a training aid. Now that's realism! Look for the new *Harpoon II* to do everything the original did, but better.



Brent Iverson, Electronic Arts
Designer of *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*

“Like everyone, I've been playing a lot of *Doom* lately. What makes it so great, I think, is that everyone thinks it's a hard game, but in fact it's very easy — easy to learn, hard to get killed in, and very easy to just pick up and play. It's like another old favorite of mine, the arcade game *Smash TV*. They've both got lots of explosions, which I like, and are so easy to understand that anyone can get into them. Some games are like work to play — you have to force your self to do it. But these are just fun.

A really old favorite I'd really have to mention is the 1981 Apple II game, *Odyssey*. It's a very primitive FRP which you can play and finish in just three hours of so. What I like about it has to do with the fact it's so short, but it's got lots of replay value. You can try and play it fast, and maybe get killed, or take it slow and probably survive to win at the end. Either way, you won't be committing too much time to getting anywhere.

As for the kind of game people might expect me to like — flight sims — my favorites are probably *F-19 Stealth Fighter* and *Red Baron*. These are games that are fair with you, something I think is very important. In *F-19* the gameplay balance is perfect, you always know what you're doing and where the bad guys are, the missions are always clear — and, best of all, I tend to win. That's my kind of game! When you die in both of those, you know exactly why, and what mistake you made. You never feel cheated, and that's very important.

34

Wolfpack CD-ROM

(NovaLogic)

There are more complicated sub sims around, but if you're looking for nail-biting excitement and an interface that lets you experience the visceral tension of the Battle of the North Atlantic, look no farther than *Wolfpack* on CD-ROM. It was originally released in 1990 on floppies, and the CD-ROM version doesn't change game play at all — but it does add several dozen new missions, along with an eye-popping intro that'll convince you your CD-ROM drive was worth the dough after all.



33

Pinball Fantasies

(21st Century Entertainment)

If you saw last month's Coverdisk, you already know why this game made the Top 40. *Pinball Fantasies* opens with a blast of clean, rocking music and super-crisp graphics, then launches into the best and most realistic pinball action ever seen on a PC screen. The game includes four separate tables, and each one of them is fully good enough to stand as a game on its own.



31

Betrayal at Krondor

(Dynamix)

Betrayal at *Krondor* is set in the world of Raymond E. Feist's Riftworld novels, and that literary grounding helps make this a pivotal title in the evolution of role-playing games. The designers used Riftworld as more than just background, incorporating the story into every aspect of gameplay to create a uniquely interactive plot, and characters that stir the emotions of the player.

There's more to the game than "You're in the Land of Nod. Now kill dragons and find treasure!"



32

D/Generation

(The Software Toolworks)

This one didn't get a lot of press, and new gamers probably haven't even heard of it. That's too bad, because *D/Generation's* clever mix of puzzle-solving and arcade action hooked nearly everyone who did get a chance to try it out. As a courier delivering a top-secret package to a scientist, you must figure a way past the security devices inside a skyscraper — and that means using bombs, lasers, hand grenades, and other objects in some very unique ways. You won't find another game quite like *D/Generation*.



30

Lemmings

(Psygnosis)

Who can forget that first romp with the Lemmings? Such dull, cuddly, needy creatures — without you, they'd be lost! And that endearing cuteness, coupled with the incredible mental gymnastics it takes to keep the wee beasties safe, made *Lemmings* one of the biggest puzzlers ever released for PC. Even though there's now a sequel (*Lemmings 2: The Tribes*), the original is a cleaner and less complicated game — and it stands up very well, even in this age of SVGA and CD-ROM glitter.

Sean Clark, LucasArts
Co-Project Leader, *Sam & Max Hit the Road*

“ I think my favorite game of all



time would have to be *M.U.L.E.* on the Atari 8-bit machines. I have many faves, but this one stands out as being the most fun and innovative. Rare is the game that's fun to play solo, yet also makes for excellent multi-player interaction. Until my old Atari disk drive finally croaked, I had it set up to play in my office for, um, research. Anyone wanna lend me a working drive? ”



29

LHX Attack Chopper

(Electronic Arts)

You might flinch a bit when you see this game for the first time. It's one of those all-polygon flight sims that dominated the genre years ago. But give it just a few moments, and *LHX* will suck you in for good. You take command of your choice of three choppers — the Apache, the Osprey, and the experimental LHX — in challenging combat missions ranging from search-and-destroy to rescue. And what the game lacks in graphic polish it more than makes up for with fast action.



28

Quest for Glory III: Wages of War

(Sierra On-Line)

The *Quest for Glory* series continues to be tops in graphic adventures, largely because of its replay value: You can be a fighter, magician, or thief, importing your character from one game in the series to the next. *QGIII: Wages of War* offers even more than usual. Instead of the expected medieval land or fairy tale village, it's set on the savannahs of Africa. With a tightly woven plot, terrific graphics, and an excellent soundtrack, *Quest for Glory III* is what adventure is all about.



27

Ultima Underworld II

(Origin)

Refining the technology introduced in the first *Underworld*, Origin created a fantastic 3D world for role-playing fans to explore in *Underworld II*. By adding some depth and personality to the non-player characters, *Ultima Underworld II* creates a much more lifelike game world. And the game penalizes players who haphazardly attack everything they see, adding a new element of diplomacy to an already impressive mix of strategy and action. This is first-person role-playing at its best, and a sure-fire favorite for fans of the genre.



26

Return to Zork

(Activision)

If you've been playing PC games as long as we have, just the word Zork is enough to send you into an episode of acute nostalgia. But the best thing about *Return to Zork* is how masterfully it balances the traditions of a classic gaming series with cutting-edge graphics and CD-ROM technology. Whether you're a fan of the old text games or brand new to computer gaming, *Return to Zork* should be in your game library.

Sid Meier, MicroProse
Creator of *Civilization* and *Railroad Tycoon*

“

My favorite of all the games I've



been involved with has to be *Civilization*, but if I was picking someone else's game I think I'd probably go for Mike Baldwin's *Empire*. Looking back at older titles, I'd say *Star Raiders* on the Atari 800, and things like *Flight Simulator* and *Air Traffic Controller* on the Apple II, that got me into computer games in the first place.

As you might have guessed, it's strategy games all the way for me.

”

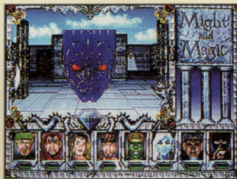


25

Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra

(New World Computing)

The first of the epic series to take advantage of VGA graphics, *Might & Magic III* is one of role-playing's most engrossing adventures. First off, the game is just plain huge. You'll be playing for weeks and even months, rather than days. The game uses a simple interface and character design routines, and combines them with devious puzzles, dozens of side quests, and a legion of animated monsters to create a title that will keep fantasy gamers busy for a long, long time.



24

Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

(Konami)

This incredibly fast, futuristic combination of soccer, rugby, and *Rollerball* offers equal parts of strategy and brutality to create one of the most playable and entertaining sports sims ever. Even though there's no such sport as Speedball, after a few minutes with this game you'll think there is. Your team of cybernetically enhanced athletes is simple to control and nicely detailed, making both scoring and viciously attacking your opponents fun and easy. You just can't beat this game for pure action.



23

Wing Commander CD-ROM

(Origin)

If *Wing Commander* were just a dog-fighting arcade game, it would still be great. But it's a lot more than that, as it combines animated sequences, voice acting, and a great story to create the first example of that now-overused phrase, "Interactive Cinema." All the follow-ups and sequels have been excellent, too, but we chose the original because it was the first, and because it still looks and plays great. And besides, once you experience *Wing Commander* you'll probably snatch up all the mission disks and sequels anyway.



22

Stunts

(Broderbund)

This is one of those under-appreciated games—in fact, we didn't really understand how good it is when the game was first released. See, *Stunts* came out in 1990, and was intended for play on a 286. It wasn't until almost a year later, when someone loaded the game on a 386DX/33, that we realized that this is a *hot* title. *Stunts* lets you drive 11 performance cars through some of the coolest stunt tracks you've ever seen. And if

Peter Molyneux, Bullfrog
Creator of *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Theme Park*

“

The games I really tend to enjoy are the

ones you can play head-to-head against another person. That's why we always include a head-to-head option in Bullfrog games wherever possible. Recently I've been playing *Battle Isle* in head-to-head mode a lot, and that's been a whole lot of fun. Another all-time favorite is *Civilization*, which I like for its simple control method and its well-balanced, well thought-out game play.

”



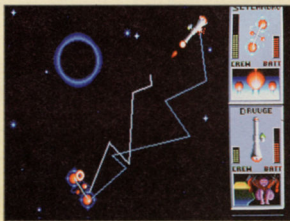
you don't agree, you can even build your own tracks. The sense of speed, and the degree of control you have over your vehicle, make this a must for every gamer.

21

Star Control II

(Accolade)

It's an over-used description, but *Star Control II* actually deserves to be called an Epic. It's epic in plot (you must battle a pan-galactic confederation to free the planet Earth), in scope (there are hundreds of star systems, most with entire planetary systems and even ancient ruins and minerals on those planets, and you can explore every bit of it), and playing time (you could easily spend weeks just free-form exploring this vast universe). And besides all that, the game is thoroughly enjoyable to play and to look at. You might get a little frustrated at times, but you'll never be bored.

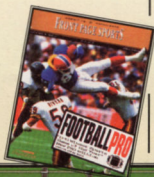


19

Front Page Sports: Football Pro

(Dynamix)

When it comes to PC football sims, there's really only one game in town. *Front Page Sports: Football Pro* is more than an on-field simulation — it's a sim that lets you experience every aspect of pro football, from the wheeling and dealing in the front office to the rousing action between the goal lines. Trades, drafts, injuries, thrilling graphics, an NFL license, and just about anything else you could think of make this the best PC football around.



20

IndyCar Racing

(Papyrus)

IndyCar Racing looks great, sounds great, and feels great. This, computer gamers, is auto racing. When you're playing *IndyCar Racing*, it looks for all the world like the view you'd see from those on-board cameras during televised races. It looks that good. And make no mistake: *IndyCar* is a sim, not a game. You'll have to tweak tire pressure, wing settings, and gear ratios as you try to shave seconds off your lap times. It's just like the real thing — and that's what makes it so good.



Paul Rieche, Toys for Bob (Crystal Dynamics)
Creator of *Star Control* and *Star Control II*, among others

“

The first thing I'd have to mention is the old Atari 800 version of *Mule*, which was one of the first EA releases. I was working at another

company at the time, and have to admit to being so jealous they'd come up with such a good game, I refused to play it for about a year! It's a very simple game, but I think the four-player version is still one of the most enjoyable things around. A couple of other old games I really think deserve some recognition are the old Stuart Smith role playing games, like *Ali Baba* and then *Return of Hercules*. They came out in the very early '80s, and were not only much more playable than contemporaries like *Wizardry*, but have been very influential on all the combat RPGs we play today, too.

Coming a bit more up-to-date, I still like the old IBM version of *Empire a lot* — we lost a whole week playing that one when we were supposed to be finishing off a game for Accolade — and I've had an ongoing *Star Control* battle with another developer for four years now. Much more recently I've enjoyed *Dune 2*. It's got some interesting bugs in it which I really like! Not everyone enjoys a game for that sort of reason, but I do.

”

18

Arena: The Elder Scrolls

(Activision)

Though it looks a lot like *Ultima Underworld* at first glance, *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* sets itself apart in the details. A perfect game for role-playing purists, *Arena* boasts all of the stats and character development you would expect of a pen-and-paper RPG, and mixes them with the latest in graphics and animation. With its mind-bending riddles and strategies and its immense scale, *Arena* is next-generation role-playing that will satisfy both newcomers and veterans alike.



17

Red Baron

(Dynamix)



Baron is still the top dog. The game puts you in one of those old wood-and-canvas planes and sends you into the wild blue to re-fight the great battles of the War to End All Wars. Best of all, multiple realism settings make *Red Baron* accessible to everyone.

Sure, flying all the latest super-jets can be glamorous. Blasting an enemy with a Sidewinder from a mile out is a lot of fun. But neither experience is as personal (or, some would argue, as challenging) as going head-to-head against a World War I ace. When it comes to simulating those first days of aerial combat, *Red*

15

Falcon 3.0

(Spectrum Holobyte)

There are a lot of jet simulations on the market, but none can really touch Spectrum Holobyte's *Falcon 3.0* for sheer realism. The flight models are all so detailed, so unnervingly realistic, that you'll gain new respect for the men and women who fly these birds for a living. Spectrum has continued to support the game over the years, both with add-on packages like *MIG 29* and *Hornet*, and



bug patches and program updates. If you're serious about flight simulations and the latest in jet aircraft, this is the perfect program for you.

16

Syndicate

(Electronic Arts)

This nasty, nihilistic future-shock from the creators of *Populous* let's you control not just little people, but violent, well-armed little people. You're the head of one of those world corporations, and you use a team of cyborgs to kidnap, threaten and just plain murder your business competitors. It's slick, addictive, and one-of-a-kind gaming.



Chris Roberts, Origin
Creator of *Wing Commander*

“

Probably my favorite game of all time

is *Elite* by Firebird, but I played that on the BBC Micro. My favorite PC game of all time? I really liked *Monkey Island 1 & 2* a lot (LucasArts) because they were very well-done for graphic adventures. They had good storytelling, especially *Monkey Island 2*. It's probably my favorite adventure. I played it until I finished it. Probably a week or so. I also like *Battlehawks* (LucasArts). It's good action, kind of the precursor to *Acas Over the Pacific*, and really well-done. *Red Baron* (Dynamix) would probably be my favorite flight simulator, because I happen to like that kind of dogfighting — the in-your-face type stuff. Technologically, *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* was very impressive. So was *F-19* when it came out.



”

14

V for Victory: Utah Beach

(360 Pacific)

The *V for Victory* series is quite simply the most playable war games available, with an easy-to-master interface and admirable depth of game play. The graphics are sharp and the game system is user-friendly, yet the actual war game components remain some of the best in any game. This is one of those titles that's easy to learn but difficult to master, and it'll keep you playing and re-playing for a long, long time. We single out *Utah Beach* because it launched the series — but by all means, check out *Velikiye Luki*, *Gold/Juno/Sword*, and *Market Garden*, too.



13

Ultima VII Part Two

(Origin)

Richard Garriott's *Ultima* saga is a true dynasty in the history of PC gaming. It's fans number in the millions, and follow the series with fervor. In deciding which of the series to recommend here, we finally settled on *Ultima VII: Part Two*. Continuing the story started in *Ultima VII: The Black Gate*, *Part Two* marks the pinnacle of what has become one of the most popular game cycles ever. The game incorporates the graphics, music, and special effects possible today with the storyline, characters, and themes that made the series great. *Ultima VII: Part Two* is a wonderful addition to the *Ultima* universe, and a must for every PC gamer.



11

NHL Hockey

(Electronic Arts)

Hard as it may be for avowed PC lovers to admit, there are times when computer gaming could learn a thing or two from the videogame manufacturers. *NHL Hockey* is a perfect example, as it recreates the speed, precise control, and action of the excellent Genesis game, and adds the kinds of statistical data and graphic excellence you expect from a PC game. This title is nearly flawless in its representation of the speed and strategies of full-tilt, real-time NHL hockey — and besides, it's one of the best PC games available.

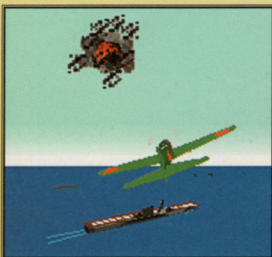


12

Aces of the Pacific

(Dynamix)

With its unsurpassed variety of aircraft and mission types, *Aces of the Pacific* may well be the most gratifying air-combat simulation ever made. Allowing you to fly missions or entire careers for either the American or Japanese forces, *ADTP* boasts some of the best dog-fighting action available for the PC. And by the way, if you have a 486DX/50 or faster, you owe it to yourself to check out *Aces Over Europe*. It's just as much fun, and looks even better!

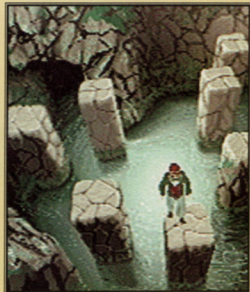


10

Alone in the Dark

(I-Motion)

Nothing looks or plays like *Alone in the Dark*. It is, without a doubt, one of the most unique and exciting games ever. *Alone in the Dark* satisfies on just about every level, from its trapped-in-a-haunted-house premise to its two-fisted, double-barreled arcade action and devilishly difficult puzzles.



You don't have to worry about casting spells or mixing potions to defeat the ghouls, ghosts, and goblins you encounter; you shoot, stab, and punch your way through them, giving *Alone in the Dark* an intense arcade feel you won't find in any other adventure game. *Alone in the Dark 2*, you ask? We didn't like it quite as well, and recommend you take the time to find the original.

Dave Grossman, LucasArts
Co-Project Leader, *Day of the Tentacle*

“

My favorite game is *Lode Runner*.

Chasing after bags of money and running away from little men with masks on strikes me as the perfect simulation of the way real life works.

”

9

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

(Electronic Arts)

It may not have the most realistic flight models in the world, and the plane and ground graphics show their age, but there's no denying that *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* succeeds wildly where it counts most — in creating a realistic sense of flight. *CYAC* lets you pilot six



planes from three conflicts in either historical missions, or "mix-and-match" sorties that let you construct some very interesting dogfights. Want to see how a Focke-Wulf 190 would fare against a B-52? Would a B-17 stand any chance at all against an F-4 Phantom? *CYAC* lets you find out. A class product that we'll probably still be playing when it's time to make our next Top 40 list.

8

Sam and Max Hit the Road CD-ROM

(LucasArts)

It's pretty tough to describe just how good, how professional and entertaining, *Sam & Max* really is. From the opening cartoon to the game's closing credits, the characters and plot just shine. The story, in which the "freelance police" investigate the disappearance of Bruno the Frozenzen Bigfoot, is a never-ending series of plot-twists and comedy. The graphics are first-rate, and match both the comic-book original and the feel of



Richard Garriott, Origin Lord British, and creator of the *Ultima* series

My favorite game is *Monkey Island 2* (LucasArts), definitely. Why? For its combination of pacing and cinematic presentation.

the game perfectly. The voice acting is just as good, and really brings the bizarre world of Sam and Max to life.



Actually, the humor was one of the few things I didn't like about it. I found it slightly sophomoric. But the puzzles are quite good, a lot of logic puzzles that I found difficult enough to be challenging, but not so hard that nobody ever gets them. If you sat there watching them long enough, you could figure it out. So it was a well-balanced challenge.

7

SimCity 2000

(Maxis)



The original *SimCity* was unlike any game that had come before it. Its premise, which challenges you to build and administer your own city, could easily have turned into a tedious exercise in resource management. But by letting you actually create a little



city, with massing commuter traffic and ever-growing residential communities, Maxis turned *SimCity* into a phenomenon. We prefer *SimCity 2000* because it's basically the same game, but plays even better.

6

Links 386 Pro

(Access)

Even though it was released two years ago, *Links 386 Pro* is still one of the best-looking games available. The near-photographic realism of its courses is amazing, and really has yet to be surpassed. But what's even better is how playable the game is, and how convincingly it simulates real golf. Hooks, slices, stance, lie, wind, and just about anything else you'd deal with in the real thing all come into play. It would be easy for all these details to become overwhelming (as they have

in lesser golf sims), but *386* addresses each through a multi-faceted interface that never intrudes on the gameplay itself. This is one of the most polished and professional games ever produced, and with new course disks available every few months or so, it'll probably remain high on our Top 40 for years to come — unless the upcoming *Links 486* can manage to surpass it.



5

X-Wing

(LucasArts)

The first time you climb into the cockpit of a tiny A-Wing fighter and head off to meet a squadron of TIE Interceptors, the drama of the Star Wars trilogy will course through you even if you're not a fan. You'll hurtle through the void of space in one of three Rebel craft, targeting Imperial fighters, blasting enemy transports, and even making a run on the Death Star in a recreation of the incredible climax to the original *Star Wars*. *X-Wing* does such an effective job of making you feel like you're actually piloting a star fighter, complete with all the strategies and challenges you just know you'd face if such a thing were popular, that it's easy to overlook the game's 100% mission success requirements in campaign mode. For high-tech dog-fighting action, nothing can touch *X-Wing*.

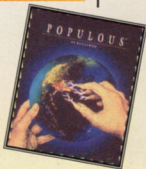


3

Populous

(Electronic Arts)

England's Bullfrog Productions really hit on something when they introduced this incredibly original game. You know the premise: You're a god, and you have to lead your people to conquer the followers of the evil god who's your nemesis. In a way, you and the other god are playing a big game of chess, and the little people who follow you are the pawns. It's unbelievably addictive fun, and one of the most appealing and playable strategy games of all time. If you want, check out *Populous II* as well. It's basically the same game, but with enhanced graphics and different god-powers. It's just a tad less playable than the original, though.



4

Railroad Tycoon

(MicroProse)

No surprise here. If you've ever played this one, you know it just had to make our Top Ten — and if you haven't played it, you're in for a real treat. Sid Meier's *Railroad Tycoon* is a game of rare complexity, challenging you to build your own railroad empire. In the early going you'll lay track across a virgin U.S., Canada, England, or Europe, looking for natural resources to exploit and actually influencing the size and growth of cities as you move cargo and raw materials along your routes. Historical factors, new technologies, and competing railroads will all influence your planning and strategies as you struggle to create an empire that'll topple your rivals — and help build a nation.

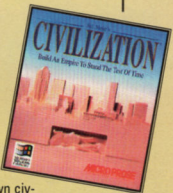


2

Civilization

(MicroProse)

Well, it's Sid Meier again! This guy obviously does top-quality work, but he really outdid himself with *Civilization*. It's kind of a sim of the history of mankind, from those days of tribal villages right up through the space age. You have to help your own civilization grow by deciding how much time and resources to spend inventing technologies, building armies, waging war, and other important things. The depth of strategies possible is impressive, and the look and feel of the game will keep you playing and exploring for months. Truly a remarkable title.



Future Watch: The Early Favorites for Next Year's Top 40

It's still early a bit early to tell for sure, but we've seen some new and upcoming titles that look so good, they're sure to make their way into next year's Top 40:

- The Fighter* (LucasArts)
- Under a Killing Moon* (Access)
- MetalTech: Earth Siege* (Dynamix)
- Phantasmagoria* (Sierra On-Line)
- Wing Commander 3* (Origin)
- Across the Rhine* (MicroProse)
- Cannon Fodder* (Virgin)
- Star Crusader* (Take Two)
- Creation* (Bullfrog)



Doom

(id Software)

Here it is, our pick for the very best PC game of all time — *Doom*. In everything from graphics and sound to network and modem play, *Doom* is about as close to the perfect game as anything we've ever seen. It's from id Software, a small company in Texas that's taken the PC gaming world by storm. In an age when mega-corporations are gobbling up small design groups and homogenization is becoming more and more noticeable, id has shown that a small, talented company can still turn out a distinctive product at least as good as anything on the market — and in the case of *Doom*, better than anything else on the market.

In *Doom*, sneaky governmental experiments with evil monsters and inter-dimensional travel have given rise to a host of terrifying creatures. The monsters have wiped out the scientists who created them, and now roam all over the base on Mars' moon Phobos. You're the last survivor of a Marine detachment sent to clean up the mess, because all your buddies have been turned into monsters and are now trying to kill you. Armed with a pistol and 50 rounds of ammo, you have to kill every last mother-loving critter on the moon. Now who can resist fun like that?

Doom is more than just a first-person shooter (although that's certainly the gist of the thing). It's the best first-person shooter there's ever been, so much better than anything else that it rises out of its arcade/action genre to dominate all of PC gaming. First off, the animation and graphics are so good that you'll flinch in your chair as fireballs roar toward you, or when you round a corner and come face-to-face with some deadly, hellish monster. Playing *Doom* is almost like having one of those neat police training courses, where cops roll through a simulated city shooting bad guys before the bad guys shoot them. It's even better, though — in *Doom* there aren't any innocents to worry about. When you open fire baddies literally explode, or dance back under a hail of molten lead, blood splashing the walls around them.

And the sound! Just wait until you hear those creatures wailing in the distance, or the whine of a fireball just missing your head, or the squishing of an enemy as he explodes under rocket fire. Then there's the rockin' music and eerie sound effects. It's just all so good!

Add to that full network support, modem play, and the ability to go head-to-head against your friends, and you have a game that's so complete, so enjoyable, and so damn good that we really had no choice but to name it the number one game of all time.



The Ten Best Games that Almost Made the Top 40

(In other words, numbers 41-50)

- 41.....1942: Pacific Air War — MicroProse
- 42.....Goblins Quest 3 — Sierra
- 43.....Pools of Radiance — SSI
- 44.....Star Trek: Judgment Rites — Interplay
- 45.....Mortal Kombat — Ultra Tech
- 46.....Day of the Tentacle — LucasArts
- 47.....4D Boxing — Electronic Arts
- 48.....King's Quest VI — Sierra
- 49.....Dune II — Virgin
- 50.....M1 Abrams Battle tank — Electronic Arts

The Eight Most Important Games of All Time

(In no particular order)

Zork — Infocom

There were text adventures before it, but the original *Zork* attracted a following that foreshadowed great things for the burgeoning field of computer gaming. It was also a great game, combining suspense, humor, and challenging play that still hold up today.

Tetris — Spectrum Holobyte

From Russia with love, this brain-teasing puzzler has become the de facto standard against which all puzzle games are judged. An incredibly addictive, deceptively simple game, *Tetris* has appeared on just about every game system out there (it's probably the only game that really works on a Game Boy!) — and people still can't stop playing it!

The Bard's Tale — Electronic Arts

The Bard's Tale was a phenomenon in its heyday, and really established computer role-playing as an important genre. It used an interface that still influences games today, and established a standard that is only now being challenged.

The 7th Guest — Virgin Interactive

Almost single-handedly, *The 7th Guest* launched CD-ROM as the platform of choice for future PC game developers. It's incredible sales proved that people were willing to step up to CD-ROM, and hungry for titles that would show off CD-ROM's potential. And it's graphics and sound showed everyone that the future of PC gaming looks very bright indeed.

Wolfenstein 3D — id Software

When id Software first released *Wolfenstein 3D*, its fast-forward kill-or-be-killed action became an instant fave. It's an important title, because it's smooth, first-person perspective has been adapted for use in so many other games. And why not? It's an exciting system, and it works. It's obviously impressed a lot of designers out there, too.

Maniac Mansion — LucasArts

This early graphic adventure, with its humor and multi-character play, was one of the first games from the influential LucasFilm Games (now LucasArts). And the game was a huge hit, and helped to define the graphic adventure game we know today. A terrific title!

Microsoft Flight Simulator — Microsoft

Responsible in no small part for launching the current flight sim craze, new versions of *Microsoft Flight Simulator* are still PC best-sellers. The game also started getting businessmen to realize that their computers could be used for more than just work.

The Secret of Monkey Island — LucasArts

The graphic adventure, LucasArt's classic adventure game outlined what would become the standard interface for the genre. The game also took some of the gravity out of adventuring, mixing game play with humor to keep play entertaining throughout.

FALCON NORTHWEST ANNOUNCES A NEW POWER FOR A NEW AGE OF GAMING:
THE MACH Vp- THE WORLD'S FIRST PENTIUM POWERED GAMING PC!

MACH V



Now there are 3 models of the ultimate gaming machine! Fill your need for speed!

FAST... 40 VGA FRAMES PER SECOND!

The MACH V Basic: for performance on a budget

Intel 486 DX/2-50™ MHz processor, 4 Megs of RAM, 255 Meg hard disk
\$1,495

FASTER... 45 VGA FRAMES PER SECOND!

The MACH V: The original with some new twists

Intel 486 DX/2-66™ Processor, 8 Megs of RAM -NEW!, 255 Meg hard disk
\$1,495

UNREAL... 59 VGA FRAMES PER SECOND!

The MACH Vp Pentium: the fastest game machine on the planet!

Intel Pentium™ processor, 512K of static RAM cache expandable
to 2 Megs, 8 Megs of RAM, 425 Megabyte hard disk w/256K cache
\$1,495

But don't take our word for it . . .

"If you want to go all out for games, the Falcon is the best bet for your money."
-Computer Gaming World

"Falcon's techs are always available and will find time to work with their customers. The team is just perfect for our needs and making gaming simulations a real pleasure."
-Combat Simulations Magazine

"Falcon MACH V lets me run all my games at the detail settings on high and I am still able to stream through the frames."
-John Stadler, Wilmington, NC

"Compared to the MACH V, XXXXXXXX 2000's [DX2/66] system ran like @#%&!"
-Gary McMillan, Fairbanks, AK

"Every game I've bought, every program I've bought, has worked perfectly on the MACH V!"
-Perry DiMarco, Howard Beach, NY

"It screams!"
-Paul Gentry, Portland, OR

Standard Features:

- 100% Compatible with All IBM™ PC Software
- Falcon VESA Local Bus Motherboard, 256K Cache, AMI BIOS
- VESA Local Bus Graphics Board with 1 Meg- 16.8 Million Colors!
- Falcon VESA Local Bus Hard Drive Controller Card -4 megs/soft
- RAM expandable to 32 megabytes
- TEAC 1.2 & 1.44 Floppy Drives
- MPC™ Level 2 Compliant 250ms Double-Speed CD-Rom Drive*
- SoundBlaster PRO™ with Multimedia Encyclopedia on CD-Rom
- Shielded Multimedia Speakers with Bass Boost
- CH Products FlightStick PRO™ 4 Button Joystick
- CH Products Automatic Speed Sensitive Dual Gameport
- Mini-Tower Case with 250 Watt Power Supply
- Two Cooling Fans with Temperature Sensing
- 14" Non-Interlaced SVGA Monitor, 28dp, Edge-to-Edge Display
- 101 Key Keyboard with Dustcover
- MS-DOS 6.2™ & MS-Windows 3.1™ -NEW
- 3 Button Serial Mouse
- UL, CSA, TUV VDE & FCC Class B Approvals
- One Year Parts & Labor Warranty
- One Year On-Site Service Policy
- * Not Included with MACH V Basic model



THE MACH V: THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE™

THE MACH V IS PERFECT WHETHER YOUR MACHINE IS A DEDICATED GAMER, OR YOU ALSO USE IT AS A BUSINESS, SCHOOL, OR HOME COMPUTER. YOU CAN CUSTOM FIT THE MACH V FOR YOUR MISSION WITH THESE UPGRADE PACKS:

BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY PACK:
WINDOWS FOR WORKGROUPS 3.11
CITIZEN GSX-220 24 PIN PRINTER
250 MEGABYTE TAPE BACKUP
\$375

STUDENT PRODUCTIVITY PACK:
CITIZEN GSX-220 24 PIN PRINTER
MICROSOFT BOOKS+HELP CD-ROM
(DICTIONARY, THE SALUS, & MORE)
\$375

EXTREME SOUND PACK:
SOUNDBLASTER 16 ASP
SONY SATELLITE/SUBWOOFER SPEAKERS
(YOU GOTTA HEAR THESE)
\$375

ENHANCED VISION PACK:
MAG MX15 - 15" 1280X1024
DIGITAL MONITOR, SUPER HI-REFRESH
1 MEG VIDEO MEMORY UPGRADE
\$375

FALCON NORTHWEST

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

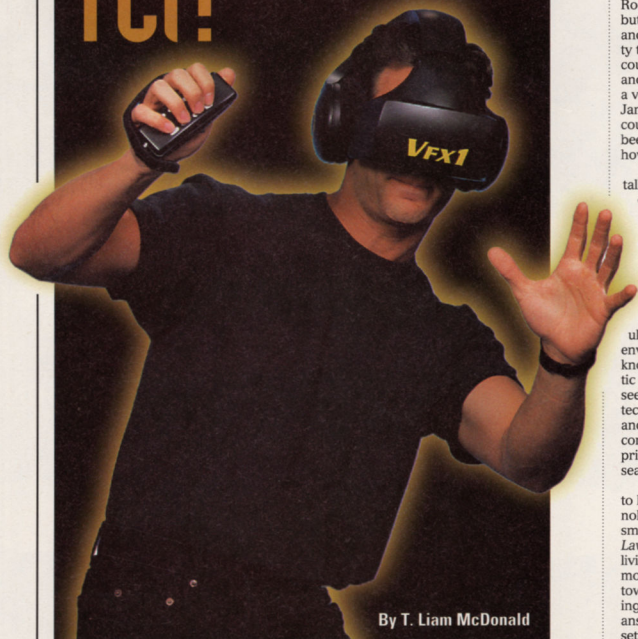
63 South Bayshore Dr. Coos Bay, OR 97420
Ph: (503) 269-0775 Fax: (503) 267-2575

To Order Call:
1-800-258-6778

VISA & MasterCard Accepted
Financing Available On Approved Credit.

Product Information Number 223

Are We Having Virtual Fun Yet?



By T. Liam McDonald

Maybe Not — But That Could Change With The Arrival of Forte Technology's New VFX1, the First VR Aimed Directly at Home Users

In David Cronenberg's horror movie *Videodrome*, James Woods' character is subjected to a virtual-reality type of experience in an optometrist's office. A weird helmet is slapped on his head, and he sees a virtual Debbie Harry engaged in a series of bizarre sadomasochistic scenes. Eventually, the technology is his reality, and it becomes a physical part of him: the New Flesh.

I wasn't expecting virtual sex with Debbie Harry when I came to the Rochester offices of Forte Technology, but I did have mingled feelings of doubt and paranoia about the new virtual reality technology they were developing. I couldn't help thinking of *Videodrome*, and how the full-immersion experience in a virtual environment eventually drove James Woods' character insane. I also couldn't help thinking of how long we've been hearing about virtual reality — and how little we've actually seen.

On one hand, there are those who talk about "desktop virtual reality," while on the other are those who talk about location-based VR, like *Virtuality* and the *Battletech* centers (see sidebar), and fully immersive equipment like helmets and gloves. The public has a definite image — created by an overzealous mass media — of what VR is and what it promises. That image is of datasuits, helmets, and ultrarealistic imagery completely enveloping the user. Any gamer who knows how hard it is to even get a realistic frame rate on mainstream computers sees this for the phantasm it is. Such technology is still in its nascent stages, and the notion that it could go through a complete evolution and shakedown in prices by, say, the next holiday buying season is absurd.

Still, many people are working hard to bring this hotly anticipated new technology to the masses, but is it merely smoke and mirrors and media hype? Is *Lawnmower Man*-type VR destined for living rooms anytime soon, or are we more likely to see a gradual evolution toward a kind of enhanced game playing? Neither are easy questions to answer, especially since no one can even settle on definitions.

Two Perceptions of Virtual Realities

Joshua Larson-Mogal, the virtual reality guru at Silicon Graphics, the company in the forefront of high-end graphical environments, has worked on the cutting edge of this emerging technology, and he has some very definite ideas about what it actually is and where it's going. "From our perspective," says Mogal, "what makes VR VR is the immersive quality. You are either in a virtual environment, or you're not in a virtual environment. It's pretty black and white. If you're talking about something on a desktop, it's not really VR."

Frank Boosman, Vice-President of 3D software developer Virtus Corp., disagrees: "People have typically and traditionally thought of VR as a set of technologies. There's a school of thought that says VR is a headset and a glove and a Silicon Graphics workstation. Then there's us, who feel that VR is really just real time 3D on your personal computer. It's defined by the experience that people have. I'd make the case that *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0* is in effect a type of virtual reality experience."

Two separate issues are at work here: one software, the other hardware. Software creates the virtual world in three dimensions using anything from *Virtus WalkThrough* to the high-res computer automated design (CAD) of *Autodesk 3D Studio*. To interact with these worlds requires various gear, such as data gloves to track hand movement, and head-mounted displays (HMDs) to provide a wrap-around view.

Software alone may provide a "virtual-like" experience, but without the hardware, it ain't VR, as Mogal is quick to point out: "The quality that VR brings that is different than interacting with a computer on a desktop is this quality of immersion: of immersing the computer user into the computer representation of data. You are surrounded by the computer-generated representation of that data, rather than that data being just part of your environment, sitting there on a desktop. I differentiate between 'Virtual Reality' and 'virtual reality.' You can use computers to generate worlds and environments that are very complex and involved, and in which you can interact, and those are 'virtual realities.' But if you're just interacting with it on the desktop, that experience is not 'Virtual Reality,' because you're not in it. It is part of your environment, and you're not part of its environment."

While the release of VFX1, the first true VR hardware product for the PC, is still months away, companies like Virtus, Vista-Pro, and Domark are trying to provide a VR-like experience. This subgenre, "desktop virtual reality," is all we have right now, and it's a far cry from donning data-suits and jumping into a computer-generated, fully interactive world. Desktop VR is generally a set of tools for creating three-dimensional worlds. As such, they are a far cry from the slick, impressive images people have come to expect from something labeled VR, but at the moment, they are all that a consumer-level computer can handle.



VFX1's head-mounted display, easy-plug card, and Cyberbat controller

VFX1: The First Step

Forte is trying to change that with their new VFX1 "virtual reality" helmet, and they're the unquestionable leader in bringing this technology to consumers at a competitive price. Similar helmets, such as those from Kaiser and Fakespace, run several thousand dollars apiece; Forte head Paul Travers expects the VFX1 to carry street price of under \$1,000. It's a challenge that Forte — who created the low-cost but quality Gravis Ultra-sound board — is well-suited to meet.

VFX1 is promising. Constructed of lightweight,

durable plastic, it's far more balanced and comfortable than other models. Realizing that "face-sucker" VR helmets are often not only heavy but also very hot, Forte created a visor and earphone arrangement that fits over the top of the user's head. This helps evenly distribute the weight of the helmet and allows for large ventilation cutouts, helping users stay cooler — and hopefully less conscious that they are wearing a helmet. An adjustable, padded lining attaches with velcro, so that it can be



Desktop VR

Aside from location-based VR centers like BattleTech or Virtuality, the best place gamers can experience a VR-like experience right now is on their home computer. The results are not always what's expected, and they involve a substantial investment in time and effort, but each of the following VR-like programs can make anyone a creator of virtual worlds. They're basically 3D-modelling programs that allow you to walk or fly (or even motorcycle, in the case of *VistaPro*) through your own virtual environment. Most are created as simple shaded-polygon structures, and often create an effective illusion of depth.

Virtus WalkThrough/Virtus VR (Virtus): The original *WalkThrough* was a popular tool with filmmakers and architects for creating buildings and rooms to aid in visualization. It gathered a large following as an entertainment product, however, and Virtus responded with *VR*, a simpler program that could be mastered in a few minutes. Providing the user with templates for such theme-related environments as space or war, *VR* made it simple to create an entire place and then walk through it. It comes packaged with sample worlds such as the Branch Davidian complex in Waco, Dealey Plaza at the time of Kennedy's assassination, and others, and enables users to create anything from a moonbase to the inside of Hitler's bunker.

VistaPro 3.0 CD-ROM (Virtual Reality Labs): Another 3D modeller, *VistaPro* is more oriented for landscapes than structures. It comes with the *MakePaths Flight Director* (for creating 3D fly-throughs of *VistaPro*), *VistaMorph* (a tool for "morphing" one image into another), and numerous landscape data files for both Earth and Mars. A user can make and fly through just about any landscape he can imagine in *VistaPro*.

Virtual Reality Studio 3.0 (Domark): Domark's original *Virtual Reality Studio* was one of the first such products to hit the market, but it didn't fare too well. They hope to rectify this by using the engine and development team from *Flight Sim Toolkit* to create a 3D modeller with more power and flexibility than the original.

Though it doesn't bill itself as such, *Stunt Island* (Disney Software), may be the closest thing to desktop VR, due mainly to its subject matter: You get to set up stunts with a variety of vehicles (planes, automobiles, ships), film them with up to eight cameras, then edit the footage any way you like. It may seem an unlikely choice for mention here, but a strong argument can be made that it's

immersive in the sense that you make the same decisions a director makes — and it's also a lot of fun.

VistaPro 3.0 comes loaded with all sorts of virtual worlds, from Stonehenge to a (fairly mild) vision of Hell.



Six floors up, four shots in seven seconds — it's all possible with *Virtus VR*.



Virtual Reality Studio 2.0 had some shortcomings, but the team who designed *Flight Sim Toolkit* (PC Gamer rating: 85%) should help spruce things up a bit.



Take control of an exciting power-packed action sequence in *Stunt Island*.

changed or cleaned. The flip-down visor means you don't have to keep taking the helmet off to return to reality, and makes future upgradability much easier. The headset comes with its own card that plugs straight into the motherboard with little fuss; sound is through a pair of hi-fidelity stereo headphones that will work with any soundcard. There's even a small microphone built directly into the visor. The heart of VFX1, however, is its visual technology.

When you flip down the visor, you're essentially looking through a pair of adjustable lenses with diopters, just like a pair of binoculars. These lenses each work with their own 428 x 240 full-color active matrix monitor. The system provides two separate images, one for each eye, creating an illusion of depth that makes images look much more life-like than if you saw them on a normal PC monitor. Forte's new Visual Orientation System (VOS) tracks the movement of the head along all planes: As the head moves, VOS provides roll, pitch, and yaw input to the program. There's no discernable lag in processing time, something that has been a major issue in the development of VR technology — if the movement of the image lags as much as a split-second behind the movement of the head, a user can experience motion-sickness and become extremely disoriented.

An integral element of this system is Forte's new Cyberbat, which earns kudos as an excellent new game controller. The three-button, hand-held device is a slick, smooth, alternative to the joystick and mouse. It doesn't require a base or desktop to work, and it responds easily to varying degrees in wrist movement.

The helmet feels odd when you first put it on, since it blots out all but the illusory reality of the video game. The first game I tried was *Doom*, which had me in a cold sweat right from the start. The bobbing motion of the game and the intense, you-are-there sensation made me feel a bit woozy, and though Paul Travers urged me to play standing up, I had the distinct feeling that I might keel over if I did. It could turn my head to the left or right and see everything around me. While the helmet's resolution is far less than what you'd get on a desktop monitor, the immersive reality of the experience tends to compensate for this somewhat.

Origin's *System Shock*, where movement isn't accompanied by as much bobbing as in *Doom*, was the next game I tried. This one worked even better: Not only can you look left or right, but also up and down and side to side. For the first time, I felt as though I were actually *part* of another environment, and not just sitting in front of a computer. As I moved through the game, I experienced an in-your-face intensity that simply can't be found on a desktop.

Still, there's one remaining issue to be resolved before VFX1 can be declared a resounding success — display quality. The VFX1 has a resolution of 428 x 240, but that's an Active Matrix Display, where it takes three pixels to equal the color you get from one pixel

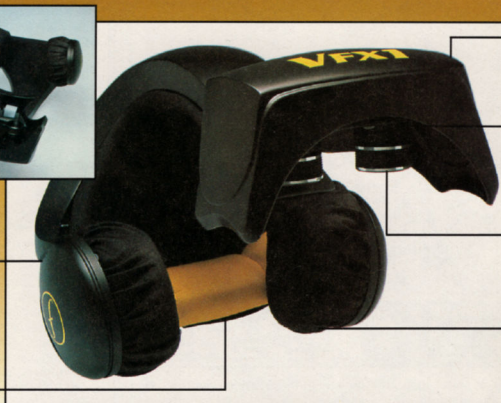
The VFX1: Virtual Reality for Joe Six Pack?

The VFX1 is lightweight and, provided you're in a decently air-conditioned room, not uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time.



Connector: The headset attaches to a card that connects quickly and easily to your motherboard. It acts rather like a mouse.

Adjustable strap: Thanks to this triumph of advanced technology, the helmet will fit snugly on almost any head.



Visor: This flips neatly out of the way so you can walk around in the helmet without bumping into walls.

LCDs: You get two high resolution Epsom LCDs for your money.

Lenses: These can be focused independently, and the IPD (interpupillary distance) is adjustable too.

Sound: The helmet's built-in headphones work with any 16-bit sound card, though 3D sound needs the Advanced Gravis UltraSound.

on your PC. It's a substantial cut in graphics quality, but it was the price Forte had to pay for a commercially priced helmet. Better monitors cost upwards of \$500 each, and there are two in each VFX1. That's not even counting other costs of productions. (As we went to press, Forte told us they were working on increasing the resolution by 30 percent, to 525 x 260.)

Forte is currently working to develop relationships with other companies that will raise the visual quality while keeping the price the low. As of now, the VFX1 helmet is the first real step towards consumer-level VR, and Forte will undoubtedly continue to be the industry leaders in this new category of home entertainment.

ally conjures up images of *The Lawnmower Man* or *Tron*, and people expecting that in the home anytime soon — or even a



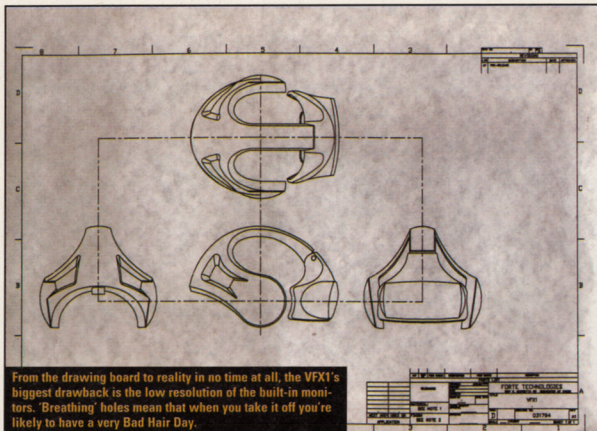
Neither Virtual Nor a Reality...Or is It?

Right now, this very instant, you can go to a software store and experience a type of "virtual reality": that is, a three-dimensional, first person experience. But... haven't we been doing this for years already? If VR is really just first-person 3D games like *Ultima Underworld* and *Flight Simulator*, then what's all the fuss about? After all, if you've ever seen anyone playing *Doom* in front of a 17" monitor, you'd probably bet your paycheck that it qualifies as an immersive experience.

Still, that's not what people think of as VR, and the reason for the disappointment is simple: The hype has far outpaced the technology. When consumers hear the phrase VR, it automati-

home-based version of location-based VR games like *Dactyl's Nightmare* or *BattleTech* (see sidebar) — are in for a rude awakening.

VFX1 presents another quandary, because it is clearly an immersive VR product. While quite good, it's still an evolving technology, and in the best of all worlds it would evolve a little further before hitting the marketplace — something companies need to keep in mind. Consumers are clearly eager to experience VR, but their expectations are a



From the drawing board to reality in no time at all, the VFX1's biggest drawback is the low resolution of the built-in monitors. 'Breathing' holes mean that when you take it off you're likely to have a very Bad Hair Day.

double-edged sword which could spell ruin for manufacturers if they aren't adequately fulfilled.

In fact, Josh Mogal sees the rush to market as the largest obstacle facing VR: "I have this fear that they're not going to be good products, and they're not going to address a lot of the hard issues, such as ergonomic issues to make them comfortable, easy, and pleasurable to use. I think there's a very real possibility of a backlash. These things will go out there, everyone will rush to

the stores to buy them, get them home, and say 'This is awful! I can't believe I just spent \$200 dollars on this!' I think these things will go out there and meet with limited success. Then there will be a cooling period while people figure out what is really going to work, especially for a home-deliverable system.

"But there are other areas

where people are able to invest more and deliver more, such as this whole new location-based entertainment market. When it comes down to it, it's the game. It's not the technology, or the location; if the game is really good, people are going to come back and it's going to grow. If the game is just boring and is relying on the latest technology to succeed, it will fail. People are not buying Super Nintendo systems because the technology is great. It's very basic stuff, but if you do the right game at that level, people will respond."

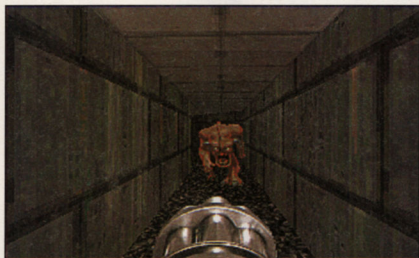
He's right, you know; it's a point that I and every other editor at PC Gamer

has been trying to emphasize during this period when CD-ROM games are all too often packed with razzle-dazzle graphics, but are painfully bereft of fun, challenging gameplay — the all-important things that got us hooked on this hobby in the first place.

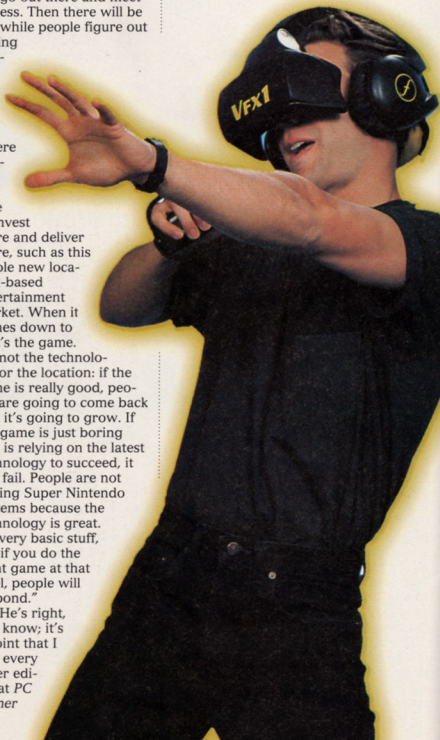


Ultima Underworld has the physics of a true 3D environment, but is it immersive?

So you still want to take a stroll to the "Shores of Hell" in *Doom*, with your controller in your hand, helmet on your head, and screaming hordes of cacodemons bearing down on you? It certainly sounds like something worth paying for, even something worth waiting for. That's a good thing: it's gonna cost a small fortune, and it's gonna be a long wait.



Doom: If this isn't virtual reality, it's close enough for thousands of players.



Leave the Helmet Behind

Virtual Worlds Puts You in the Driver's Seat for Mass Destruction



You may experience sensory overload when you first enter a BattleTech center scan — everything here is designed to convince you that you're a soldier about to enter a futuristic battle.

While the potential of VR for home users is still vague, there are places you can go right now for a full immersive experience. Thanks to extensive TV coverage, you're probably familiar with Virtuality, the entertainment center found in malls across the country that features two HMD-based games — *Dactyl's Nightmare*, which pits up to four players in a sort of gunfight on an astral plane, and *Exorex*, where players control walking robots in a fight to the death.

Thanks to the bulky helmets, the games in Virtuality centers are immediately recognizable as VR. In contrast are Virtual World theme parks, currently located in Chicago, Houston, San Diego, and Walnut Creek, CA. Virtual Worlds now offer two games: A hovercraft-racing game called *Red Planet*, and *BattleTech*, a game based on the FASA BattleTech board-game universe. Actually, Virtual World centers were originally called BattleTech centers, and when we were in Chicago for Summer CES last year we got a chance to try out this very unique form of "immersive entertainment."

Walking in the door of a BattleTech center is like walking into the future. The entire center is constructed to look like a launch area for MechWarriors, walking robots manned by human pilots (look for the PC incarnation of these babies in *MechWarrior II*, due out in August from Activision). Prices vary from seven to nine bucks per 25-minute session, though you only play for 10 of those minutes. First-time players are issued an ID card with their name, call-sign, and identification number, which are used to keep track of your skill level for subsequent missions even months later. Then it's on to a video briefing from an officer of BattleTech Command for an explanation of the control system and mission goals before you (and a partner, if you like) pick a Mech and get ready to square off

against real live human players driving (or whatever) their own 'Mechs.

Each player climbs into a pod, at the center of which is a computer monitor representing your view from the 'Mech's cockpit. Once the door is closed you're in an entirely new world, surrounded a myriad array of blinking lights, screens, and buttons. Your goal is simple: Blast opposing 'Mechs before they blast you. The controls can be daunting at first, with rudder pedals, a joystick, and throttle at your disposal, but most players get into it after a few minutes.



Once you've begun maneuvering around, you truly get the feeling that you're at the helm of a futuristic fighting machine. The landscape and BattleMechs are nicely rendered, and it's easy



to spot buildings and rock formations to hide behind. If you're destroyed, you're taken back to your starting point and given a new 'Mech. After the ten-minute battle is over, players leave their cockpits and go to debriefing, where they can watch the action from a third-person perspective, and peruse a blow-by-blow textual description of the combat.

Virtual World locations scheduled to open this year include Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Dallas, with Toronto, London, and Hong Kong to follow.

— Steve Poole





With head-to-head play via modem, about the only thing missing from Activision's home version of *BattleTech* is the fancy pod. Maybe someone should give Thrustmaster a call...

PCG

"I Wish My Parents Had ImagiNation."



Call it PC envy, call me crazy... but they're having fun across the street and I want in! See, my buddy's parents got The ImagiNation Network™ and they're all playing and talking with new friends clear across the country – live, in real time. No kidding, I was over there last night and James (my friend) was dogfighting in this WWI flight simulator game called Red Baron®. His cousins live 2,000 miles away, but that didn't stop them from sending James down in flames. After that, his mom got on and played speed chess ♔ with TRISH, her on-line sister. And then, at midnight, his dad got on as ZORK2,  dungeon master of The Shadow of Yserbius™. But don't bring it up, James is kind of sensitive about it. And talk about cool. The interface is full color and easy to understand.  You just point and click and you're there. Even James can do it.

Hey, I just figured out how to get mom and dad ImagiNation! The first month's basic membership is free!



Call and we'll send a free membership kit with **5 FREE HOURS*** to explore The ImagiNation Network. You pay just \$5.95 for shipping & handling.

1-800-462-4461/ext. 716

IMAGINATION!

The ImagiNation Network requires at least a 386 IBM PC compatible computer, a 2400 baud modem, a mouse and keyboard, and about 600 kb of available memory. Red Baron is a registered trademark of Dynamic, Inc. The Shadow of Yserbius is a trademark of The ImagiNation Network. *Free hours must be used within 30 days. For details on membership options and rates, call 1-800-IMAGIN-1 between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. P.D.T. Offer expires 9/30/94 and is available to first time members only. ©1994 The ImagiNation Network. All Rights Reserved.

Product Information Number 159

The PC Gamer review system

How we rate the games

Whether you're interested in a particular title or not, we want our reviews to be something you look forward to reading each month. So we make sure they entertain, inform — and are completely reliable.

After all, you pay a lot for your PC entertainment. Our editors have been playing games for years, and they're committed to telling you the truth about every title. Guaranteed.

What the Ratings Mean

100%-90% Classic

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% Excellent

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will probably fall into this category — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% Very good

Good games, which we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre — although there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% Good

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has some significant flaws.

59%-50% Fair

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a great way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% Below average

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% Don't bother

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Black Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review comes two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements, and the hardware configurations we'd recommend as the least you'll need to *really* enjoy the game. The thing is, while a program generally will run on the minimum system as specified by the manufacturer, it'll often be so clunky and slow all the fun goes out of it. Because of this, we test each game independently on a variety of machines, so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

This month's PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



Each and every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our coveted Editor's Choice award. It's not easy to earn the Editor's Choice, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PC Gamer* Editor's Choice logo on a game at your local software shop, you can bet it's among the best of the best.

Fields of Glory
A landmark in Micro-Miniatures war gaming

p.62

X-COM
A sure-fire winner for any action-strategy fan

p.76

Bridge Baron
It's got everything a bridge player could ask for

p.84

This month's Editors' Choice winners — check out the reviews, and find out why!

Pacific Strike

Category: Air-combat simulation
 Developer: Origin Systems
 Publisher: Origin Systems, P.O. Box 161750, Austin, TX 78716

REQUIRED

486; 4MB RAM;
 24MB hard-drive
 space; DOS 5.0 or
 later; VGA

WE RECOMMEND

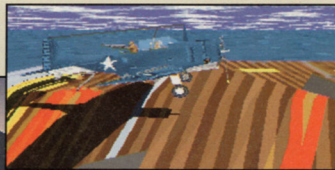
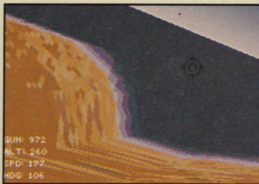
Pentium; 8MB RAM;
 Disk-cache;
 Joystick (Thrust-
 master FCS or CH
 Flightstick Pro
 strongly recom-
 mended); Thrust-
 master Weapon
 Control System;
 Rudder pedals

M.S.R.P.: \$79.95. Speech Pack (optional) \$24.95

For an air-combat simulation to be successful, it has to do one thing above all else: It must create a realistic sensation of flight. You can pack a sim with knock-out graphics or state-of-the-art sound effects, but if the animation isn't smooth enough to make you feel like you're really flying, then all the handsome artwork in the world won't convince you that you're actually piloting an airplane.

It's a rule Origin should have heeded more closely with *Pacific Strike*, their first historical air-combat simulation. When the graphics are turned up to their highest detail, the planes do look great. But at that setting, the frame rate of the animation is unacceptable to all but the most persistent PC pilots. Fact is, even if you knock down the graphic detail for everything — ground, sky, planes, ships — to the lowest level, the game still doesn't run very smoothly. With all that detail turned off, *Pac Strike* doesn't even look as good as 1990's *Chuck Yeager Air Combat*. Nor does it fly as good.

On a high-end machine — a 486DX2/66MHz with 8MB RAM and a local-bus video card with 1MB of memory — the animation only runs at five or six frames per



Origin's RealSpace graphics are often stunning, but sometimes the ground detail goes all wacky when you get up close. Did Pablo Picasso design that flight deck?

Pacific Strike has several strong points. Unfortunately, it fails in one crucial area — creating a realistic sense of flight.



As in *Strike Commander*, Origin has peopled this sim with all sorts of characters. (1) Jester's a good ol' boy, but not the best pilot to have by your side. (2) Why do you have to turn to this bald cook for the latest news of the war? (3) Biggs always goes on about how guts are what counts. (4) Noodles can't wait to show everyone who's the best pilot on board.

second on the highest detail levels; I could squeeze 12 or 13 frames per second out of the game with everything knocked down to pre-1989 standards, but the planes still never seem to handle right. Even on these settings, lining up a shot is always a dicey proposition unless you're playing on the easiest difficulty settings.

It's a shame, because in fact *Pac Strike* has many standout qualities. Like *Strike Commander* and the *Wing Commander* games, *Pac Strike* is a story-driven simulation with multiple plot branches. You're an American pilot who's been assigned to Pearl Harbor. The intro

shows you and your buddy Jester inside the barracks as the first wave of Japanese dive bombers strikes Ewa Airfield. Racing out to the runway, you hop into your Wildcats and take off, determined to make the Japs pay for their cowardly attack. If you knock out the Val bombing the airfield, you can go defend the battleship *Nevada*. In real life, the *Nevada* suffered some damage, but wasn't sunk; in *Pac Strike*, you could lose her for the entire war.

This is the main thrust of *Pacific Strike*: It gives you the chance to rewrite

history — or, as with the *Nevada*, to ensure that things happen as they did in real life. Case in point: If you're able to sink the patrol boats that sighted the *Hornet* and forced Doolittle's bombers to take off early for their raid on Tokyo, they'll make it to friendly bases in China. In real life, the Japanese sunk the *Yorktown* at Midway; here, you can stop that from happening — and in doing so, change the balance of power in future battles.

During your tour of duty, you'll fly a nice variety of aircraft (see "Come Fly With Me") and meet an interesting bunch of characters. There's Jester, the country boy so full of himself who thinks he's invincible; Biggs, who tends to say tactics don't mean squat compared to guts; Squints, a veteran with a bit too much combat under his belt; Noodles, a hotshot who's out to prove he's the best pilot in the Navy; and many, many more.

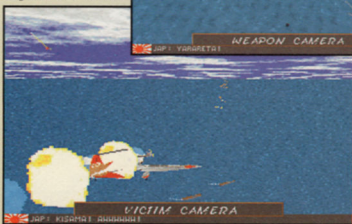
It's the same game-within-a-story engine as in *Strike Commander* and the *Wing Commander* series, and while it has some minor problems (Why does the cook know more about the war than you do? And why do you only see three or four crewmen at a time on a ship carrying thousands of troops?), it does make *Pacific Strike* more vivid than the rather impersonal career modes of sims like *Aces of the Pacific* and 1942's *Pacific Air War*.



When set to the highest detail levels, the planes in *Pacific Strike* look great. But you'll need at least a Pentium to get a decent frame rate with this sort of graphic embellishment.

One drawback of this design, however, is that there's no way to enlist as a Japanese pilot like you can in *Aces of the Pacific* and *1942: The Pacific Air War*. There are 15 Japanese planes to fly in the Instant Action missions, from Zeros and Franks to the Emily bomber and Baka suicide planes — but when you do fly them, you configure them as American planes, and assign American planes to Japanese pilots. It's disorienting to send your buddies Noodles, Biggs, and Squints on bombing missions in Judds, then hear a Japanese pilot screaming as he dives down on you in his Corsair.

There's great variety in the 25 planes here, but the mediocre frame rate and flight control make



Multiple viewing perspectives bring the action to life. The Victim Camera is especially useful — it'll let you know if a plane you've shot eventually crashes, or whether it'll be able to limp along well enough to do more damage to our side.

appreciating them difficult. I've played *Pac Strike* for many, many hours, mainly in an attempt to puzzle out who at Origin (or Electronic Arts, who owns Origin) decided that it would be okay to release the game with not only the frame-rate problem, but several other flaws as well.

For starters, only one digital sound effect is played at a time, so turning on all the sound effects does more to create a sense of disbelief than to help you suspend your disbelief. You hear your engine droning until you squeeze the trigger, at which point the engine noise just stops, and you hear only your guns firing. Cease fire, and the engine noise returns a half-second later — only to give way to the sound of enemy bullets hitting your plane.

Origin has included an option to let you man the rear machine gun on appropriate planes. It's a feature lacking in other games, and a welcome addition here — but when you hop in back, no one's flying the plane!

That's right, if the plane is nosed slightly down when you take over rear-gunner duties, you continue to descend until you crash. Come on! If Origin is gonna let us be the rear gunner, they could at least have included an autopilot option to keep the plane level!

Even installation can be a tricky business. On page five of the Install Guide is a warning that you should *disable SMART-DRV* because "bad disk errors can erroneously be generated when installing with a disk cache active." But this warning is in the Troubleshooting section, which presumes you've already installed the game's nine disks! Thanks for the early warning. Not listed here, but perhaps more important, is the info in a help file found on most of the online services. It warns you to

run CHKDSK or SCANDISK before installing, or else you could destroy or lose files or directories from your hard drive. That seems like pretty crucial information — the sort of thing you'd expect in big bold letters at the very start of the Installation guide.

Still, *Pacific Strike* eventually started to grow on me. Maybe it was the sight of a Zero's wings ripping off as I pounded it with .50-caliber bullets; maybe it was after I made my first successful dive-bombing attack. Maybe it was finally making a successful carrier landing. And I'm not the only one who's warmed to the game: Other players who howled in disgust after their first few missions have wound up apologizing to Origin for judging the game prematurely. And to their credit, the tech support team at Origin has been working feverishly to help the many customers who've been reporting problems.

In the final analysis, I'd suggest waiting for the eventual CD-ROM release. It'll save you hard-drive space, and it'll give Origin a chance to make *Pacific Strike* the game it should have been in the first place.

— Stephen Poole

PCG

Come Fly With Me

Pacific Strike lets you fly a very satisfying mix of planes during your Tour of Duty, including...

WILDCAT — Two types of Wildcat, both more durable than the Zero but lacking that plane's finesse.



HELLCAT — The successor to the Wildcat is faster, has greater firepower, and possesses greater high-speed maneuverability.

CORSAIR — This gull-winged beauty didn't see major carrier action until late 1944. Not as maneuverable as the Hellcat, but much faster.



DEVASTATOR — Unless heavily escorted by Wildcats, the Devastator is not much more than a great big flying coffin.

DAUNTLESS — The Dauntless can handle sustained dives of nearly 70 degrees. It was sometimes deployed against torpedo bombers.



AVENGER — The Avenger's low stalling speed made it perfect for carrier duty. Slow and lumbering, but can withstand enormous punishment.

HELLDIVER — The Helldiver carried more bombs than the Dauntless, but its flight characteristics were much less forgiving than its predecessor.



BEARCAT — The successor to the Hellcat never saw action in WWII, but incredibly did do a stint in Vietnam and Thailand in the 1960s.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The story setting makes for a great flight-sim environment, and there are tons of great planes to fly.

LOWS: Poor frame rate, touchy controls, and confusing setup instructions.

BOTTOM LINE: Hold off until a CD-ROM version comes out. It's bound to be the best choice.

70%

Inherit the Earth

Category: Graphic Adventure
 Developer: The Dreamer's Guild
 Publisher: New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078

REQUIRED

286; 2MB RAM;
 8MB hard-drive
 space; DOS 5.0 or
 later; VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

386/33MHz; 4MB
 RAM; Supported
 sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

Over the years, New World Computing has become pretty good at creating, well, new worlds. With such past successes as the immense *Might and Magic* series and the addictive *Spaceward Ho!*, the company has shown a flair for keeping players occupied for hours in strange lands, constantly waiting for the next plot twist or sub-quest. And with its fantastic graphics and brilliant sound, *Inherit the Earth* may lead you to believe that New World's done it again. But this time round they seem to have forgotten that there's more to a game than a good story and some special effects. A game has to be fun, too.

Inherit the Earth does have an intriguing story line, putting you in a future where humans are extinct. All of the characters in the game are walking, talking animals called Morphs, who've aligned themselves in different tribes based on their original species. Legends abound of the furlless humans who gave the gifts of speech and hands to the Morphs and then, mysteriously, disappeared. All that's left to prove humans even existed are ancient ruins, and strange artifacts that are revered as sacred.

One of the most powerful of these artifacts is an object known as the Orb of Storms, which can be used to predict the weather. As Rif, a young member of the

New World has created a fascinating alternate Earth — but they missed the boat when it comes to gameplay.



Not all of the animals you run across will be friendly (especially the boars, and some dogs). Be careful what you say — after all, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Fox tribe, you've been framed for the theft of this sphere. You have a month to find it and prove your innocence, while the Boar tribe holds your girlfriend hostage to make sure you don't run off. So you set out on your quest, accompanied by a boar and an elk who're meant to keep an eye

on you. Along the way, you'll face ugly racial prejudices, the whims of powerful rulers, and various strange tribes.

Given the wealth of possibilities that such a great premise presents, you'd think



Thankfully, long journeys are represented using this overhead map.

you'd be in for a great adventure. Sadly, though, *Inherit the Earth* just never delivers on that potential. Most of the game is spent following one person's directions to go see another person, and then that person refers you to someone else, and so on, leaving you about as excited as any delivery boy going about his daily routine.

At the other extreme, when you are forced to figure out where to go next, you're given almost no information. So you end up wandering aimlessly around the countryside, hoping to collide with someone who'll get things rolling again.

There are some puzzles thrown in, but they're tiresome at best. Adding to the frustration level, it seems to take forever to move around when you're in a town, partly because you're zoomed in to the action so much that you can only see what's immediately around you. The only way you can be sure you've found everything you need or have talked to everyone is to literally comb an entire town — and that can



Make sure to talk to this fortune teller before you leave the fair. She'll set you off on the right path.

It's a Dog-Meet-Dog World

Here are a few of the many races you'll run across in your travels. Most of these animals have inherent prejudices and attitudes, so it gets pretty easy to know what you're up against.



The Fox tribe tends to be quick, agile, and crafty. They've also earned a pretty bad reputation as thieves.

Members of the Elk tribe follow a strict code of honor. They are the strong-hearted, trusty, and loyal protectors of the forest.



Boars are arrogant, strong, and generally mean. They love mud and truffles above all else. They tend not to trust — or like — any of the other races.

When you need questions answered, it's best to consult a member of the Rat tribe. Almost all rats are scholars, and as such, they know things the other tribes have forgotten.



The Cat tribe is the easiest to get along with. Cats are protective, quick, and loyal. You'll find them to be the most helpful of all the various Morphs you come across.



Members of the Dog tribe can be good companions and trustworthy allies, but they can also be cruel and mean.

Since their personalities can vary wildly from individual to individual, you'll have to judge each dog on a case-by-case basis.



take what seems like an eternity.

Inherit The Earth has all the ingredients to be a great game; once you scratch the surface, though, its flaws become apparent. This is New World's first real attempt at a

graphic adventure, and they seem to be running into some of the same problems more experienced graphic-adventure publishers have already solved. I hope there'll be a sequel incorporating an overhauled game engine, because the premise has potential. But as things stand, *Inherit The Earth* just never delivers the level of gameplay that today's fans have come to expect.

— Trent Ward



Inside some of the Human ruins, you'll come across strange artifacts from a world long since lost.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Beautiful VGA graphics, good voice acting, and an exciting new game world.

LOWS: Slow-paced, with tedious gameplay, and puzzles that just never seem to entertain.

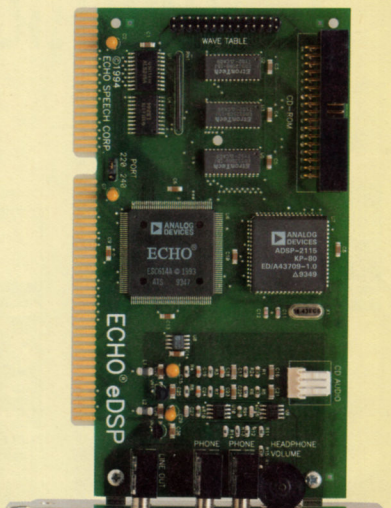
BOTTOM LINE: *Inherit The Earth* has everything going for it, except the thing that matters most — enjoyable gameplay.

63%

PCG

THE GAME BOARD

(DSP AUDIO, UNDER \$100)



COOL FEATURES

- DOOM™ SUPPORTED IN STEREO!
- BARNEY COULD INSTALL THIS!
- INSTANTLY READY TO ADD MAJOR SOUNDS TO YOUR GAMES!
- WAVETABLE OPTION COMING SOON!
- MADE IN USA!

TECHNICAL FEATURES

- Sony Double Speed CD-ROM interface
- 16-bit 44kHz stereo under Windows™
- Supports Sound Blaster™ compatible software
- 16-bit stereo CD quality sound
- Only one jumper
- Intelligent self sensing installation and diagnostics
- DSP supports downloadable software upgrades
- Stereo line out for amplified speakers
- Dual headphone jacks for private play

GAMES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE COMPLICATED. SOUND BOARDS ARE NOT!

THE eDSP IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE DIRECT FROM ECHO AT THE INTRODUCTORY PRICE OF \$99.95

TO ORDER OR FOR DETAILS CALL 1-800-DSP-ECHO



ECHO SPEECH CORPORATION

6460 Via Real, Carpinteria, CA 93013

TEL: (805) 684-4593 FAX: (805) 684-6628

Product names are trademarks of their respective holders.

Product Information Number 151

Seaworthy

 CD-ROM

Category: Simulation
 Developer: Digital Illusions
 Publisher: Alliance Interactive Software, 1053 N. Pine Island Road,
 103, Plantation, FL 33322

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive; 286;
 640K RAM (550K
 free) DOS 3.3 or
 later; EGA

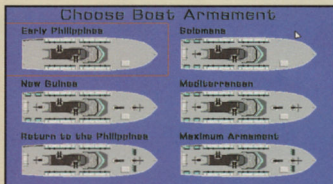
WE RECOMMEND

Hard-drive installa-
 tion; Supported
 sound cards; Joy-
 stick (*Sub Battle*);
 Mouse (*PT Boat*)

M.S.R.P. \$29.99

In the world of computer entertainment software, "classic" doesn't have to mean great. It can also just mean old. That's the case with *Seaworthy*, Digital Illusions' Classic Series CD-ROM that bundles two older naval simulations on one shiny new disc. The two games, *Sub Battle Simulation* and *PT Boat*, were alright in their time. There's just one problem — their time was back in 1987 and 1988.

Actually, these two games are still playable, given their advanced years. They offer many of the features you'd expect from today's simulations: campaign scenarios, accurate weapons, and ships, and historical data and background. But saddled with EGA graphics and limited to just a few basic perspectives, the *Seaworthy* simulations just don't measure up anymore.

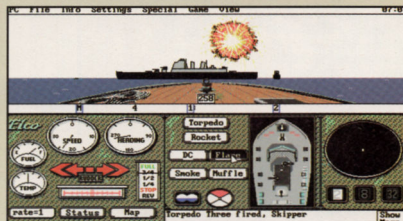


In *PT Boat* you can select the armament you'll carry on board, choosing between speed and power.

Sub Battle, the older of the two games, is also the weaker of the two. On paper, all the components are in place. You can command one of three submarines for either the German or American side in 60 individual missions or the entire war; weapons and vessels are historically accurate, and they change during the war as new equipment becomes available.

But the graphics that looked so good a few years ago appear crude today. The ocean is flat. Ships look like black cardboard cutouts. Torpedo wakes are white V's that lurch toward the target. Despite

Is there a nostalgic craving for EGA games of the 1980's? Not really, but these two old World War II simulations are back anyway.



PT Boat: That cruiser's a little too close for comfort. What would JFK do in a dangerous situation like this one?

the grandiose claims on the game box ("*Sub Battle Simulator* set the standard against which all other submarine warfare simulations have been judged for over seven years"), the fact is that there are other sub sims, just about as old as *Sub Battle*, that look and play much better (the original *Silent Service* comes to mind).

PT Boat has a few more bells and whistles, including mouse support and speech from the crew. Here you can choose from 45 missions grouped in five scenarios. The action's pretty intense, but you're limited to only four cockpit views.



In *Sub Battle*, you'll use this map view to chart your course through the Pacific.

You can also call in air support, which is a big help for a lone *PT Boat* going up against convoys with destroyer escorts. But again, the graphics are the game's undoing. Though they're a little bit better than those in *Sub Battle*, they're still flat and uninteresting.

There's also an unexpected bonus in *PT Boat*: an original U.S. Navy Department publication called "Know Your *PT Boat*," and a very neat map charting the war in the Pacific.

Sound effects are surprisingly good in both games, with the sound of incoming fire and the report of your own guns quite

convincing. *PT Boat* especially makes good use of sound, but the action tends to freeze when the sounds play, so pulling off any death-defying maneuvers is a little tough.

Despite their outdated graphics and all their other shortcomings, *Sub Battle* and *PT Boat* are still fun to play. If you can forget how good today's computer games look (and



Another exciting *Sub Battle* scene: Those planes are bad news. Better dive!

that there's much better stuff available, both classic and modern), you might get a thrill out of sinking a carrier or evading a destroyer while you pump a few shells into her.

But when you compare them to today's state-of-the-art simulations, *Sub Battle* and *PT Boat* just don't stay afloat. Even at the low price, there's not much reason a gamer should settle for sims that are this dated.

— Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: These games should run fine on just about any machine. The simulations are fairly deep in historical data and play options.

LOWS: Graphics are just too dated, and the games weren't top-of-the-line even when new.

BOTTOM LINE: Unless you just can't afford better, don't waste your money on these.

55%

Casino Expert for Windows

Category: Gambling sim
 Developer: Raven's Quest Software Labs
 Publisher: Expert Software, 800 Douglas Road North Tower, Suite 355,
 Coral Gables, FL 33134

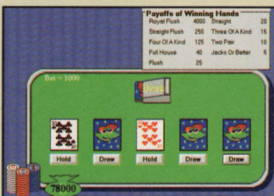
REQUIRED

386; Windows
 3.1 or later; 4MB
 hard-drive
 space; VGA

M.S.R.P. \$14.95

WE RECOMMEND

Mouse



Feast your eyes on a gold mine! In real Draw Poker, a pair of Jacks or better and you break even. Here, you make five times your money!

no limits on bets or debts. So smart players will sit at that Draw-Poker table, laying out \$100,000 dollars a hand, until they walk away with billions. Even if you hit a streak of bad luck, the house will let you go so far into the hole that your losses are displayed in algebraic shorthand. You have nothing to lose, and everything to win — not exactly my idea of gambling.

So there it is. Five workable casino games for Windows, no risk, and the opportunity to tell your friends you won \$5,000,000 on a single hand of Blackjack.

Personally, I'd rather spend more and get a better game.

— Matt Frite

Casino Expert for Windows has one big plus on its side — it's price. For \$14.95 (probably under 10 bucks on the street), trying this Windows casino pack is a pretty low-cost gamble. But it's still a gamble, because whether or not you get your money's worth depends entirely on you, and what you want out of a casino pack.

What do you get? Well, there's Blackjack, Draw Poker (basically, video poker), one slot machine, Baccarat, and Roulette. There are no tutorials for any of the games, although Blackjack does include a strategy grid. So you have five very average, bare-bones casino games. The 16-

color graphics are alright, and the actual game mechanics seem fairly realistic. The .WAV sound gets pretty tiresome, though, and you'll probably end up turning it off.

But the game really falls apart in two areas. First off, the Draw Poker payoffs are five times higher than they should be. When I looked at the payoffs sheet, it said Jacks or better pays five. I just assumed that meant five on a five-dollar bet — even money, as it should be. But no, you actually get five times your bet for a measly pair of Jacks, ten times for two pair, and so on. For me, part of the challenge of gambling is that you might lose. But at these odds, you can't lose!

The second problem is that there are

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: You won't be risking much even if you don't like the game.

LOWS: You just can't lose, so this ain't gambling. And the games are all quite average.

BOTTOM LINE: If realism doesn't matter to you and you're tight on cash, you might like it.

51%

Time Out Sports Baseball

Category: Sports/Entertainment
 Developer: Microleague
 Publisher: Microleague, University Office Plaza, Bellevue Building,
 Suite 201, 262 Chapman Rd., Newark, Delaware 19702

REQUIRED

386SX; Windows
 3.1; Mouse
 DOS 3.1 or higher;
 Hard drive;
 SVGA 256 color
 monitor

M.S.R.P. \$39.95

WE RECOMMEND

Windows-compatible
 sound card

"utilitainment," gives you the chance to do. The four games included here are fun, quick, and easy to play — just the ticket for goofing off at work.

In Batting Practice, you take your best swings against left- and right-handed pitchers, scoring points for singles, doubles, triples, and home runs. Fungo Fielding puts you in the outfield, where you shag fly balls that come faster and faster. Sign Calling 101 tests your skills at understanding all those crazy signs from the third base coach, and Umpire Arguing lets you take on the role of a major league manager, heaping abuse on an ump by selecting insults from a menu.

There are also two screen savers included, and animated baseball play-



This ump is getting pretty steamed. You can tell by his facial expression when you've gone too far.

after hour with *Time Out Sports Baseball*. These games were designed to offer a quick, fun break from work, and on that level *Time Out Sports Baseball* is ideal. And if you pay attention to those reminders, you won't have to worry about losing your job when you're playing it.

— Lee Buchanan



Swing for the fences in the batting practice game. The screen switches to an overhead perspective after you hit the ball.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great graphics. Games are quick, clever, and easy to learn.

LOWS: Lacks depth, but that's to be expected from a product like this; the ump-baiting game is pretty silly.

BOTTOM LINE: A nice time-out from work.

75%

It's 2:30 in the afternoon, and after a trip to an all-you-can eat buffet with your co-workers, you're starting to nod off as you stare at the spreadsheet on the computer. You can't bring yourself to play another game of Windows solitaire, so what's a bored professional to do?

Well, how about a little batting practice? Maybe you'd like to try shagging a few fly balls? Or perhaps you want to see how much you can tick off an ump before you get sent to the showers. That's what *Time Out Sports Baseball*, the first in a series of products that Microleague calls

Serf City: Life is Feudal

Category: Kingdom building
 Developer: Blue Byte
 Publisher: SSI, 675 Alhambra Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086

REQUIRED

4MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse (mouse and joystick needed for two players)

WE RECOMMEND

Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$60.00

.....
Another little-people-building-a-kingdom game, *Serf City* is plenty of fun. But it could easily have been a lot better.

built the buildings, made the food, crafted the tools, formed the militia, and generally tidied up around the kingdom. In short, there would have been no kingdoms without them. *Serf City* puts you in control of these serfs, more or less, by giving you the power to designate which buildings to build, where to build them, how to connect them with roads, and so on.

At the beginning of each game, you are presented with landscapes of varying



■ Your enemy looks to be doing pretty well for himself! Nice big castle, lots of activity all around — what more could a feudal lord ask?

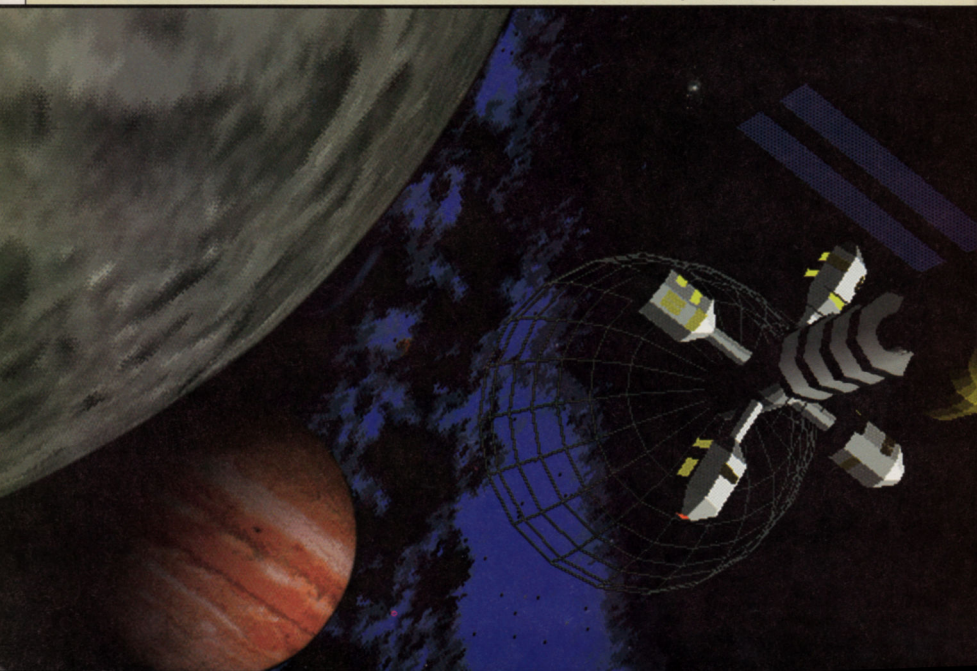
.....
 If the number of kingdom builder games on the market is any indication, then gamers are a slavering pack of megalomaniacs bent on controlling the lives of little computer people. I certainly am. There's real satisfaction in building a good city/kingdom/feudom, sending tiny people on their way with a task, creating a strong economy, and bashing the heck out of your neighbors. SSI's *Serf City: Life is Feudal* provides each of these small pleasures in moderation, and does a pretty good job of it. Nit-picker that I am, though, I can't help but think it could have been better.

Serfs, as you no doubt know, were the lowest of the low in medieval culture: the pebeians who did the manual labor,



■ Some of the best moments in the game come while watching your little serfs go about their daily routines. Look at that wee tiny sailor!

sizes and composition. Hills, mountains, flatlands, bodies of water, trees, and various rock formations — all quite handsomely rendered — form the terrain. The first step is to place a castle on a choice piece of land. Each castle comes with 20 serfs and enough supplies to build the initial few buildings. Two dozen building types determine the types of jobs the serfs will do and the kind of economy you'll ultimately have. ■





options allow for play against another human, or against a mixed bag of computer opponents, from the sheerly incompetent to the ruthlessly Machiavellian. Multiple terrain sizes, types, and randomly generated combinations mean the game's got an excellent level of replayability.

Serf City is fun and modestly challenging, but it could have been better. It lacks the sense of humor you'd expect from the title, which is too bad since there are many opportunities for funny touches. Plus, the various charts and menus are ter-

ribly confusing at times, and the serfs are

■ That two-story building near the top of the screen is a toolmaker's shop — very important to a successful village. Without tools, your folk can't do much of anything.

For example, the first thing to do is build several guard huts, since these will expand your frontiers and provide protection. But you also have to build structures to train the knights that occupy these huts, and then build blacksmiths to provide them with weapons. The blacksmiths need minerals — well, you get the picture. It's an interconnected system of creating and transporting products, and all of these products have to be moved along a complex network of roads. Build the roads badly, and traffic jams occur, slowing your economy.

Of course, your opponents are doing the same, and if their frontiers begin to encroach upon yours, buildings are destroyed and combat ensues. Numerous



■ Looks like your enemy is hard at work mining coal, and he'll use it to forge things like weapons. Better make sure you're ready!

not rendered in good detail.

Combat simply involves sending a number of your guys over to the other side to bash at the enemy, and isn't particularly fulfilling. Extra challenges, such as random events, acts of nature, or different buildings to construct, would help a lot. A little more effort would have made *Serf City* much better, since the fundamentals of game play are there. As it is, it stands as a lightweight but entertaining game for the feudal lord in each of us.

—T. Liam McDonald



■ This menu shows all the various occupations the serfs are engaged in, and how busy they are.

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT**

HIGHS: Good landscapes, and engaging gameplay.

LOWS: So-so character graphics, cluttered interface, and only moderate depth.

BOTTOM LINE: Fun if you're unfamiliar with kingdom-building, but it needs more variety.

75%

If it were any more real, you'd be drinking Tang.

New Microsoft® Space Simulator is so authentic, even astronauts are asking for it. Select your spacecraft from our fleet and blast off. Once in space, command your ship in our free-flight mode. Explore the fiery red canyons of Mars, or the explosion of a supernova, all based on actual satellite data. It's just one of the realistic simulations we have waiting for you to take control. To get off the ground, shuttle over to your reseller and pick it up.



Millennium Auction



Category: Strategy/Simulation
 Developer: Eidolon
 Publisher: Eidolon, 5716 Hosholo Avenue, Riverdale, NY 10471

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive;
 386/33MHz;
 Windows 3.1; 10MB
 hard-drive space;
 4MB RAM; SVGA;
 Windows-compliant
 sound card; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

Double-speed CD-
 ROM drive;
 486/33MHz; 8MB
 RAM; CD-ROM
 cache; MIDI-capable
 sound card.

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

I don't know about art, but I know what I like — and I really like *Millennium Auction*. At first I was more than a little leery of this futuristic art-auction simulation. I expected another graphical extravaganza that was all glitz and no substance. But after getting acquainted with this unique product, I realized that *Millennium Auction* had gotten its hooks into me — and I honestly felt as though I'd become a part of this fantastic, surreal world.

The game takes place just after the end of the millennium (naturally). Up to four human players can compete, each playing as one of eight wildly different characters who have only two things in common — a huge supply of UN dollars (yeah, it's one-world-government-time, folks) and a love of things artistic. You can access a detailed dossier on each character, creating the illusion that these are real people with



The quality of the artwork — both digitized photos of real-life items, as well as objects created especially for the game — is outrageously good. I emptied my pockets for the picture of J. Edgar "Mary" Hoover!

real lives — very crucial, since one of these guys is supposed to be you.

The rendered characters — which I'm guessing were created in 3-D Studio — are some of the most striking you'll see in a computer game. They aren't realistic per se — they're actually closer to department-store mannequins than photorealistic depictions of real people. But they'll catch your eye, and the animation is so fluid that you willingly yield yourself to the illusion

Knockout graphics highlight the world's first art-auction sim, but there's a lot more to *Millennium Auction* than pretty pictures.



The Gallery, where you'll meet your fellow bidders, check out your reflection, and gather valuable information.

that they are indeed flesh and blood.

After entering the gallery, you can

eavesdrop on conversations between various characters (yours included). Like the dossiers, the info you pick up here lends depth to the characters, drawing you further into the game world. You'll also uncover clues (usually very subtle) as to trends in the art world and elsewhere that could affect the value of the pieces for sale that day.

The best part of eavesdropping, however, is in the presentation. You see the two people talking, but as they speak symbolic images pop up onscreen, and the characters begin to warp, bend, glow, inflate, twist, and more. It's surreal with a capital S, and while some might consider it a bit on the pretentious side, I had no problem with sitting back and enjoying the show.

You'll also want to head to Zeke the janitor's office to read the newspaper and check out radio and TV broadcasts. Some news seem to clearly affect your bidding: If a tsunami is headed toward Easter Island, for example, the Easter Island head up for sale that day will drastically increase in price after the wave hits the island. Sounds simple, but if that wave peters out, the head isn't quite as special anymore. Other

news is much more subtle, reflecting the general trends and attitudes of the early 21st century and you often have to rely on pure gut instinct.

From there it's on to the bidding room, and play is pretty straightforward: You bid on items — both real-life art and fictional objects created for the game — based on the facts and rumors you've heard. The descriptions accompanying the historic items are very well-written, actually teaching you a thing or two about art and art history. And the digitized photos of historic objects are sharp, clean, rich, and vibrant — they look absolutely wonderful.

During each game, you're given the chance to sell any items you've bought on the open market in an effort to increase your holdings. The player with the highest portfolio value after all items have been bought and sold wins — but while it's exciting to come out on top at the end of the bidding, there are no real losers in *Millennium Auction*. It's an impressive debut, and I

highly recommend it to anyone looking for something that's new and fresh — and fun. — Steve Poole

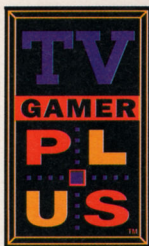
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Lavishly rendered solid 3D characters, surreal animated sections, and lovely digitized photos flesh out this engaging simulation.

LOWES: Little variation from game to game.

BOTTOM LINE: A believable game world that's entertaining and (gasp!) educational. Much fun for CD-ROM owners.

79%



DISCOVER THE BIG PICTURE

PLAY COMPUTER GAMES ON YOUR TV



YOU Just Plug It In

AND THE ULTIMATE COMPUTER GAMING EXPERIENCE IS YOURS! GET READY FOR YOUR MOST AMAZING GAMING ADVENTURE EVER WITH TV GAMER PLUS™ PLAY COMPUTER GAMES LIKE THEY WERE MEANT TO BE SEEN: BIGGER AND BETTER ON YOUR TV! EXPERIENCE COOLER COLORS, BIGGER BOSSES, MEGA MAPS AND SUPER-SIZE SWORDFIGHTS.

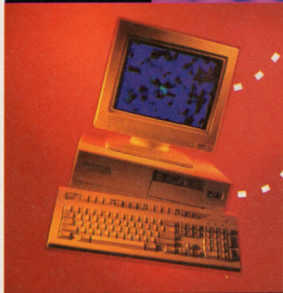
TV Gamer Plus™ Features

- 5 YEAR WARRANTY
- WINDOWS SUPPORT (IBM VERSION)
- IBM & MAC VERSIONS AVAILABLE
- EXTRA-LONG RCA CABLE TO TV
- ALL CABLES INCLUDED

Product Information Number 166



FREE BONUS GAME
WITH PURCHASE
SEE PACKAGE FOR DETAILS!



SIIG, Inc.
6078 Stewart Ave., Fremont, CA 94538 510/657-8688
© 1994 by SIIG, Inc. TV Gamer Plus is a trademark of SIIG, Inc.

TV Gamer Plus™ is Available At The Following Locations



Fields of Glory

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE

Category: Historical simulation
Developer: MicroProse Ltd
Publisher: Spectrum Holobyte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501

REQUIRED

386; 2MB RAM;
15MB hard-drive
space; DOS 5.0;
VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

486DX/25MHz; 4MB
RAM; Sound Blaster
or compatible sound
card; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

It's been a while since we saw a Napoleonic warfare sim, but *Fields of Glory* ends the drought in style.

Fields of *Glory* is a landmark game: the first PC simulation to capture the realism and color of tabletop miniatures within a deep yet playable game system. It will delight veteran war-gamers, and it will astound newcomers, and it sets a standard against which all subsequent Napoleonic games must be judged.

All four major battles of the Waterloo Campaign are represented: Quatre Bras, Ligny, Wavre, and Waterloo itself. Two simplified fictional battles are also included, primarily as tutorials.

You may assume the role of Napoleon, Wellington, or Blucher. You can accept historical deployment, non-historical deployment by the computer, or free deployment, which allows you to position units wherever you like (within certain reasonable limi-

Trust me: you have never seen a miniatures-style war game that comes within shouting distance of what designers Jim Bamba and Adrian Earle have achieved in *Fields of Glory*. Each little animated figure is represented in historically accurate uniform and colors. Each bayonet gleams. Columns of smoke rolling troops cast realistic shadows. Volleys of smoke fall out when the infantry fire. In short, it's just about the most convincing miniatures system ever designed for the PC.

Historically, most casualties in Napoleonic battles were inflicted by artillery (one of L'empereur's favorite tactics to mass his artillery in one sector of the battlefield, pound a hole in the opponent's line, then send the infantry forward to break the line at that point), and the game accurately reflects that fact. Tiny animated cannon are horse-drawn to their assigned positions, unlimbered, and fired by tiny gun crews, who actually simulate the motions of swabbing the barrels and ramming home the powder and shot. The cannon recoil when fired, and if they hit their target, you see the results — either a destroyed building, a smashed caisson, or a pile of dead infantry.

All of this is happening, mind you, in real time, with cannon booming, muskets crackling, and horses clopping; the stirring background music is transcribed from real Napoleonic-era marches. The total effect is drop-dead spectacular. Cavalry charges, with sabers drawn and horses galloping, are especially splendid to behold.

Orders are issued by clicking on individual units (divisions and brigades) or the flags that represent larger, corps-sized formations. You can order units to Deploy, Hold, Withdraw, or Assault. Use the Assault command carefully — any unit given that order will fire a single volley, then bayonet-charge and melee with



The spectacle belies the bloody nature of Napoleonic conflict.

the closest enemy formation. If the enemy is wavering or withdrawing, the assault will sweep everything before it; if the enemy unit is still cohesive, the assaulting troops will be cut down in droves.

The game's data base, which can be accessed at any point during the game, is a true marvel. It displays all useful information about commanders, their units, and their organization within each army. Each data base entry accurately displays uniforms (unit) or a portrait (commander), a summary of

his personality and professional style, and a breakdown of the status and condition of each of his units.

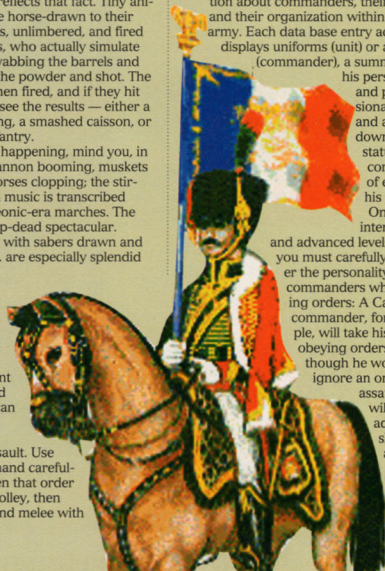
On the intermediate and advanced levels of play, you must carefully consider the personality of the commanders when issuing orders: A Cautious commander, for example, will take his time obeying orders, and though he won't ignore an order to assault, he will advance slowly to avoid any unnecessary risks;



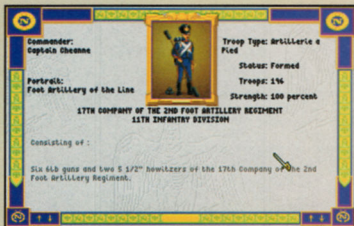
The data base is packed with useful information, as well as authentic graphical representations of period uniforms.

tations — you can't just drop a cavalry division behind the Duke of Wellington).

Three scales of view are available: An eight-square mile view that shows the entire battlefield (units represented by small flags), a four-mile "grand tactical" view (units represented by little-bitty animated figures, each one representing 70 actual soldiers or a three-gun battery of artillery), and a one-mile view that provides a God's-eye-view of the actual fighting.



“The total effect of *Fields of Glory*'s miniatures system is simply drop-dead sensational. Cavalry charges, with sabers drawn and horses galloping, are especially splendid to behold.”



The incredibly thorough data base depicts people and events all the way down to the individual artillery batteries.

an Impetuous commander will press his attacks hard come what may. If you're in a race with the enemy for possession of a building or hill, select a Rash commander and turn him loose.

The command system accurately reflects the reality of Napoleonic combat. You issue orders on the brigade level, which are carried out by computerized subordinates according to their personalities and leadership abilities. You may or may not receive confirmation that your orders have been carried out; in any case, you'll have to zoom out to the four-mile view to see everything that's happening and formulate new orders. In terms of realism, this process is equivalent to standing on a piece of high ground and surveying the battlefield with the naked eye.



The Select Battle screen is clear and well presented — though two of the battles (Nivelles and Wagnée) are fictional.

while the one-mile view is like watching one sector of the action through a telescope. Even battles fought on the easiest level require many command decisions and well-timed orders.

At the lowest echelon of command, you can change a unit's facing (the direction in which it aims its guns), and order a specific formation: Line, Column, Square, etc. Units will only adopt historically accurate formations; only French infantry can adopt a mixed line-and-column formation, for instance, because only the French soldiers were trained in that maneuver, and

only light infantry can adopt a skirmish formation. Units not under your immediate control will adopt realistic formations under computer control, but will do so in a plodding, text-book manner.

Which brings up one of the most crucial aspects of a war game: the quality of its artificial intelligence, and this is perhaps the weakest point of *Fields of Glory*. I didn't personally see any glaring mistakes in the artificial intelligence, but other users have reported some very questionable decisions by the computer — infantry units standing with

their rear exposed until they're assaulted, artillery units sitting idle when being assaulted by cavalry, and generals for some reason leaving their units and charg-



Part of the Waterloo battle, as seen from the eight-square-mile strategic view...



From the four-square-mile scale...



And finally, the one-square-mile view. The level of detail here is vivid and convincing, and gives you an idea of what Napoleonic warfare was actually like.

ing the enemy all alone, to name a few.

During the time I spent with *Fields of Glory*, the strength of the computer opponent seemed appropriate — simply moronic on the easiest level, moderately challenging on the medium levels, and very hard to beat on the Elite and Guards level. The ultimate test is to refight Waterloo on the



Artillery fire is accompanied by loud explosions and puffs of white smoke — followed by a swath of destruction in the lines of the unlucky infantry.

hardest level; no matter which side you choose, you will probably echo the Duke of Wellington's verdict that the battle was "a damned near-run thing."

Documentation is thorough, well-illustrated, and clear, and most players will be ready to jump in after one 30-minute session with the tutorial. The "What Actually Happened?" section contains a series of well-written accounts of each real-life battle, and plenty of suggestions regarding tactics.

This game has a definite *elan* that is more than the sum of its excellent parts. In the Designers' Notes, Jim Bamba gives us a clue where that comes from: "I've played games with toy soldiers since infancy. Over the years, the games grew more sophisticated... It all got more adult, but I'm pleased to say it always remained as much fun as when I crawled over the kitchen floor yelling 'BANG! BANG!'".

Right on, brother. — William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Epic sweep combined with a fantastic amount of detail; very friendly interface; stunning graphics.

89%

LOWS: The AI routines are dodgy, and tend to spoil the realism.

BOTTOM LINE: The finest tabletop miniatures war game yet released, and a true joy to play.

Shadow of the Comet

CD-ROM

Category: Graphic adventure
 Developer: Infogrames
 Publisher: •Morton, 1333 Ocean Avenue, Suite J, Santa Monica,
 CA 90401

REQUIRED

386/16MHz; CD-ROM
 drive; 3 MB RAM;
 DOS 5.0 or higher;
 VGA; Sound Blaster
 or compatible card

WE RECOMMEND

386/25MHz; Double-
 speed CD-ROM
 drive

M.S.R.P.: \$79.95

When your new game bears the words "Inspired by H.P. Lovecraft," chances are you'll have a pretty successful title on your hands. And that's just the enviable position •Motion finds itself in thanks to *Shadow of the Comet*, a horror-themed graphic adventure based on the Call of Cthulu role-playing system from Chaosium. The Cthulu name is sure to attract those die-hard

Lovecraft fans (and there are plenty of them) to *Shadow of the Comet* like moths to a flame — if word of mouth doesn't send it to the bargain bins first.

The game casts you as a young astronomer trying to solve the mystery of Lord Boleskine, another astronomer who, while studying Halley's Comet 76 years ago in the sleepy village of Illsmouth, saw something so horrible that it drove him insane. The comet is about to return, and you arrive in Illsmouth to see if you can get to the bottom of all this spookiness. It's an interesting idea, although the story never quite delivers any real, compelling horror.



Illsmouth might look pleasant enough, but you'll soon find out that there's a deadly secret lurking beneath the exterior of this quaint little town.

If you want Lovecraftian themes, you'll find 'em here; if you crave above-average gaming and CD-ROM sizzle, read on...

Standing in the way of your investigations are a bizarre collection of villagers, ranging from guardedly helpful to murderously unfriendly, who all seem to know more than they're letting on. If you've ever played a graphic adventure, you know what to do next. Poke around, look for clues, find allies, and be careful what you say to the more suspicious characters. Pretty standard fare — not necessarily a bad thing, but you won't find any groundbreaking game play here.

You'll explore Illsmouth using one of the clunkier, clumsier interfaces I've seen in quite awhile. You walk around the screen by positioning your cursor and clicking when the cursor arrow points in the direction you want to move. It sounds simple enough, but your character can only move at right angles, and so guiding him is like a leading a dog that doesn't want to walk, and *refuses* to move on diagonals. While this may be at least workable in most instances, it's just unacceptable when you have to move fast to avoid a monster or some other supernatural nasty. Luckily, you can use your cursor keys for movement, and that's almost always the best way to get around in the game.

The interface is limiting in the way it handles other game functions, too. The cursor doesn't change to a Look or Talk icon; you have to walk up to the person or object, then right-click to bring up an iconbar and select the appropriate action. Again, you can use hotkeys for all these actions; in fact, I found myself bypassing the mouse altogether about 90% of the time.

But what about the CD-ROM stuff? Well, you get voice acting for all the characters; it's been

adequately done, but like the story and action it's nothing special. There are also some nice expository segments, though none of them really help create the horror atmosphere you'd expect in this sort of game. The graphics are average (again), and the soundtrack is pretty good (I see a pattern developing here...).



Great! Old Jugg was about the only friend you had in town, and now somebody's gone and killed him. Don't you just hate it when that happens?



Poor Lord Boleskine. This is what happens to careless astronomers who go poking around Illsmouth during comet season.

Other than the primitive interface, *Shadow of the Comet* is never actually a bad game. But there's nothing about it that stands out, at least it rise above the many other very good graphic adventures out there. Lovecraft fans might enjoy the familiar themes and settings, but others will find only average gaming.

— Matt Firme

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: It can be a lot of fun to play, especially if you're a Lovecraft fan.

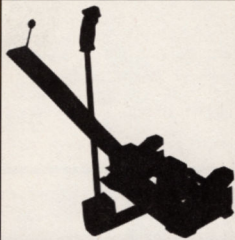
LOWS: Primitive interface, and the game never really delivers on its horror premise.

BOTTOM LINE: Steadfastly average gaming. It's not bad, though, and you might enjoy it. But there are a lot better games available.

59%

Introducing... THE UNIVERSAL COCKPIT™

MULTI-ROLE SIM CONTROL



FLIGHT SIMS
Stick/Rudder/Throttle
(not shown, yoke configuration)



AUTO RACING SIMS
Steering/Brake/Throttle
Push Button Shifting

The **UNIVERSAL COCKPIT** Allows You to Take Command of Your System Three Ways (stick, yoke or steering). Now You can have Complete Control whether on the Track or in the Air.

FEATURES:

- Tough Aluminum Construction
- Free-Standing System. No Clumsy Desk Mounting Clamps or Suction Cups!
- 3-in-1 Modular System, Easily Converted

Coming Soon: The **UNIVERSAL JOYSTICK™**—"Complete" Control of Auto Racing and Flight Sims in an Economical Desktop Package. **ASK FOR DETAILS!**

SIMULATION SYSTEMS

1-800-647-7623

Product Information Number 152

SIMULATION SYSTEMS • 791 E. Brokaw Rd. • San Jose, CA 95112 • 1-800-647-7623 • Fax (408)441-0650

Advertiser Index

Company	Page Number	Production Information Number
21st Century Entertainment	21	158
Access	28-29	101
Apogee	50	165
CH Products	27	127
Creative Labs	IBC	160
Echo Speech Corp.	55	151
Ensoniq	94	232
Falcon Northwest	43	223
FormGen	5	157
Gametek	88	242
Liberty	102	183
Merit Software	105	220
Microsoft	58-59	—
New World Computing	85	241
NuReality	81	161
Ocean	BC	100
Origin	15	102
Sierra On-Line	7	109
Sigma Designs	91	142
SIIG	61	166
Simulation Systems	65	152
Software Toolworks	31	155
Spectrum Holobyte	99	112
Take 2	IFC-1	171
Titan	25	164
Virgin Interactive	69	116
PC Gamer subscription	96-97	—
CD-ROM Today subscription	75	—

Fast, Free Information!

Want more information about products and advertisers featured in this issue?

1. Circle the numbers on the attached reply card to receive FREE information on advertised products.
- Product Information Numbers may be found at the bottom of each advertisement.
2. Print your name and address and mail today!

It's that easy!

Evasive Action

Category: Air Combat Simulation
 Developer: Glyn Williams
 Publisher: The Software Toolworks, 60 Leveroni Court, Novato,
 CA 94949

REQUIRED

386DX/40MHz; 4MB
 RAM; 6.5MB hard-
 drive; DOS 5.0 or
 later; VGA

WE RECOMMEND

486DX/33;
 Supported sound
 cards; Joystick

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

"But I don't like flight sims," my friend Max whined, "I can't remember all of those key commands and besides, those ThrustMaster things scare me!" "Trust me," I said, "You'll like this one. Even a mope like you can fly it." I cranked up *Evasive Action*. The Software Toolworks' new dogfight simulator, and seconds later Max had scored his first kill on a bright red Fokker triplane.

Well, not really. On his first couple of tries he crashed on takeoff, but after ten minutes he *did* get the hang of it and actually seemed to be enjoying himself.

"I actually seem to be enjoying myself," he said, switching to the World War II arena and starting a new game. "Don't you have to go write a review or

Following *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* and *Air Duel*, *Evasive Action* offers pure shooting satisfaction in an arcade game for sim fans.

strokes to a bare minimum, and let the players go up against the computer or a friend in true seat-of-the-pants fashion.

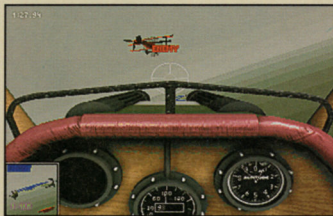
And that's exactly what you get in *Evasive Action*, an understated little gem with one-on-one combat in eight astonishing aircraft and four different historical periods. And even though the game has a surprising number of options, the gameplay remains simple and straightforward no matter how you set it up. Come on, I'll show you...

The four historical periods are World Wars One (1918), Two (1943), Three (1995) and Four (2064), each with two fighter aircraft and three types of gameplay: Dogfight, Air Race, and Attacker. Dogfight is pretty obvious — you fly against a single opponent and try to kill him. Air Race is a timed event in which you must complete a series of barnstorming stunts ahead of your opponent. Gunshots do not kill him, but merely freeze him for a few seconds and allow you to catch up.

Attacker is an airborne game of tag — you're "it" until you're either tagged with a direct weapon hit or the timer runs out and you're forced into changing roles.

After picking a historical period, you select an aircraft: Sopwith Camel or Fokker Dr. 1 in 1918; F6F-5 Hellcat or A6M2 Zero in 1943; F-18 Hornet or MiG-29 in 1995; and, of course, the popular Sonishi Laserman or Aoun Leatherback in 2064. You may even fly the same aircraft as your opponent in a test of pure flying skill.

Instrumentation varies little between time periods; you start out in World War One with an airspeed indicator, altimeter, and Locater Screen, which acts as a video camera with a picture of your enemy, home base, or nearest stunt, and a red arrow showing you which direction to fly to find it. World War Two adds a System Monitor which indicates landing gear status and gun selection; World War Three adds a Head-Up Display, radar screen, and enhances the System Monitor; and World



An actual unretouched photo snapped by Charlie Brown's dog somewhere over Ypres.

War Four rounds it all out with some very tasty new weapons and a transparent spacecraft canopy which acts as a three-dimensional HUD.

The only era in which you have a compass is 1995, and a throttle indicator (controlled with '+' and '-' keys) is only provided in 1995 and 2064 — very odd, even considering the intentional simplicity of the game.

The joystick buttons are assigned 'Select' and 'Do' functions: Button 2 toggles through options such as undercarriage operation, weapon selection, and damage displays (when available), while Button 1 (the trigger) performs

the selected option.

That just leaves the F2 key to toggle through assorted tactical views, F1 to return to your cockpit view, TAB to toggle Locater displays and 'V' to declutter the Locater. Six keys, two buttons and a stick!



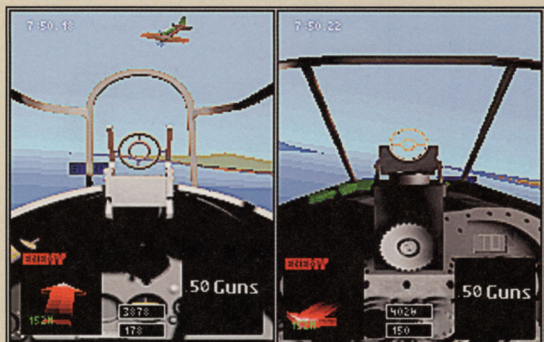
Successful completion of some hair-raising stunts can earn you a fresh supply of pointed metal projectile bits.



The preflight screen, just before you enter World War Four. All gameplay options are accessed from here.

something?" I watched as he thundered down the carrier deck, raised the Hellcat's undercarriage and was gone.

Glyn Williams, the creator of *Warhead*, figured that a whole segment of the gaming community was missing out on the pleasures of flight simulation simply because they were intimidated by the number of control keys that needed to be memorized. So why not simplify the whole thing? Lose any pretense of plot, cut the key-



Two player split-screen action in 1943. This is probably the ultimate challenge.

Simplicity itself, with only rudder support missing, although understandably so.

Graphically, *Evasive Action* is reminiscent of MicroProse's *Air Duel*, but a little more colorful. The planes are Gouraud shaded and the landscape is equally sparse, but it runs a lot faster than *Air Duel*, and if you look closely you can even see the rudders on the WWI planes model!

The computer-controlled pilots know their ACM, but are non-aggressive to the point of aggravation.

Except for the guaranteed head-on shots, which they usually start taking at about eight km away, you practically have to give them your butt on a silver platter before they'll go on the offensive. On the other hand, you just know that your friends are gonna burn you every chance they get.

But it's the two-player mode that really kicks *Evasive Action* into high gear. Two-player action takes place on a vertically split screen, and each player has a full complement of instruments and weapons. When you're out of ammo completing a Stunt will re-arm you, while touching down at your home base will repair damage, leaving you ready to fight again. Destroying ground targets along the way

will also add points, just in case you actually care about stuff like that.

Although the European version of *Evasive Action* includes modem support, it was removed for the American release because the tech guys suspected that it was responsible for the game's tendency to lock up. Software Toolworks is working on a modem patch that should be available by the time you read this (which they'll charge you ten bucks for), but before you run out and try to find the U.K. version, trust me — the modem routine is erratic (I never got it to work), the game locks up regularly, and it fails to remove the sound driver when you quit, leaving all 26K of it behind in RAM.

The two min- or complaints I have with *EA* are that: 1) The planes are stall-crazy and dive for the dirt with the least bit of provocation, particularly in WW I where you can barely climb above 1500 feet without plummeting. And 2) The machine guns are all on semi-automatic — you have to make rapid, individual trigger pulls to get an effective spray of bullets. Now the MiG-29 is supposed to fire five-round bursts, but that doesn't explain the

Fokker, Hellcat, and the rest. Hopefully, the modem patch will fix this irritant as well.

Evasive Action is a great introduction to air combat for sim-phobes, and while it may be just a little too simple for the hard-core crowd, I'm betting that more than a few of 'em will find it a guilty pleasure.

— Scott Wolf



Sequences like this Sidewinder launch may be shown either full screen or in the Locator window.



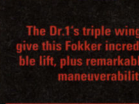
Stumbling onto the set from Ocean's *Epic*, this Sonishi Laserman discovers the apparent remains of the Hindenburg.

THE PLANES

The eight birds in *Evasive Action* offer a little something for everyone. Whether you're a confirmed bi-winger or a jet jock, you'll find something to fly here.



The Sopwith Camel's a nimble mix, but she'll dive for the dirt if you don't treat her right.



The Dr.1's triple wings give this Fokker incredible lift, plus remarkable maneuverability.



Although much faster than the Zero, the sturdy Grumman Hellcat suffers from poor visibility.



Once he's in your blind spot, the lightweight Zake can easily stay there all day — or can he?



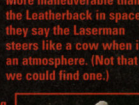
A Navy pilot I know told me he'd take the MiG over the F-18 any day. (I think he's been discharged since then, though.)



The computer-controlled Fulcrum will try to lure you far from home, waste your missiles, then dance around the sky like a bee. We say: Waste him early.



The nasty-looking Leatherback carries four Teaser Missiles. Because of its great acceleration, it tends to go ballistic at high speed.



More maneuverable than the Leatherback in space, they say the Laserman steers like a cow when in an atmosphere. (Not that we could find one.)

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Fast, fun and easy to play, especially in two player mode.

LOWS: Planes stall too easily and the machine guns are set to semi-automatic.

BOTTOM LINE: Great fun, but probably too simple for serious flight sim fans.

80%

Dragon's Lair



Category: Action Adventure
 Developer: Epicenter/ReadySoft
 Publisher: ReadySoft, 3375 14th Avenue, Suite 7, Markham, Ontario,
 Canada L3R 2L6

REQUIRED

CD-ROM Drive;
 386/25; 4MB RAM;
 VGA

WE RECOMMEND

Double-speed CD-
 ROM; 486/25; 8MB
 RAM; Supported
 sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

It's hard to believe that it's been 11 years since former Disney animator Don Bluth stunned the arcade crowd with his laser-disc classic *Dragon's Lair*, an unprecedented cartoon-style adventure that became the touchstone for every other game of its type.

Take a minute and think of all the games you've seen since then that have played "just like *Dragon's Lair*"—that familiar phrase which means a game has outstanding graphics and animation, but very limited (and often confusing) control over its main character.

Now, after years of teasing us with fractional, floppy-based installments and offshoots of the coin-op, ReadySoft has finally given us the full original game, with all of its beauty and blemishes.

Almost.

Almost? Well, three of the coin-op's 33 main scenes have been cut, not because



Surf's up, dude! Too bad old Dirk brought his sword along instead of his board.

of space limitations, but because they contained background scrolling that most PC hardware can't handle (the ReelMagic version includes them all). So, except for the Burning Ropes, the Wind/Gem Room and the Falling Round Platform, *Dragon's Lair* on CD-ROM is exactly the way you remember it. Almost.

Whaddaya mean, almost? Well, fearing that players were already too familiar with the game, ReadySoft mucked about with the timing and random order of some of the scenes. While the coin-op actually made you feel as though you were pro-

The laser-disc classic finally comes home. But will it turn out to be the Prodigal Son, or the Black Sheep of the family?

gressing deeper and deeper into Singe's castle, the CD-ROM version is all over the place, and scenes that once led logically to certain other scenes no longer do so.

Success is still more dependant on memorizing the correct moves than any sort of coordinated reflex action, and there's no way that even the most experienced adventurer could anticipate some of the expected actions. The only way to learn how to stay alive is to die trying—over and over again. By the time you reach Singe's lair you'll find yourself opting to play in French, Italian or German just to break up the monotony of Princess Daphne's constantly bleating "Please save me" speech.

So what's right about the game? Well for better or worse, it plays exactly like the original, requiring only four directional movements and a fire (sword) button from either the keyboard or a joystick. Even the muffled, input-confirming "bonk" sound is there and, unlike some other *Dragon's Lair*-like CD-ROM games, you have the unlimited option to continue from a recent restart point when you've lost the last of your 5 lives. (A flawlessly executed game only takes eleven and a half minutes, but don't count on that happening very often.)

The full-screen animations have a peculiar, washed-out quality, but are otherwise pretty smooth once you've performed the half-hour "Fine-Tuning" which optimizes each scene for your particular system. The tiny data file generated by this operation is the only hard drive space the game requires. Alas, even after fine-tuning, certain sound sync problems remain—though they don't really interfere with the gameplay.

For a game that's 11 years old, *Dragon's Lair* holds up pretty well, especially when compared with some of today's dazzling but empty CD-ROM adventures. It's not likely that this new ver-



Dirk the Daring's St. Vitus' Dance on the Black Knight's electrified checkerboard. As with the rest of the game, graphics are great, gameplay isn't.



It's not Jim Morrison, but it's a Lizard King, nonetheless. Many gamers' favorite DL scene.

sion is going to win over any converts, but like *Microsoft Arcade*, it's a genuine piece of gaming history, and just the thing for the appreciation of gamers who fondly remember the original.

—Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: It plays exactly like the arcade original.

65%

LOWS: It plays exactly like the arcade original.

BOTTOM LINE: If you liked the coin-op, you'll probably like this new CD-ROM version. But if you didn't, this won't change your mind.

**Paranoid population.
Psychotic criminals.
Power hungry corporations.
Big Brother government.
Haves and have nots.**

America?

Close.

BENEATH A STEEL SKY™

**In a city only *The Watchmen's* Dave Gibbons could create.
In a future only Virtual Theatre could make real.
In a world only you can save.**



Distributed by



Virgin

Available on
PC CD-ROM

©1994 Virgin Interactive Limited. All rights reserved. Virgin Interactive Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Virgin Interactive Limited. Virgin Interactive Limited is a registered trademark of Virgin Interactive Limited.

Product Information Number 116

SSN-21 Seawolf

Category: Naval warfare
 Developer: Electronic Arts
 Publisher: Electronic Arts, PO Box 7530, San Mateo, CA 94430

REQUIRED

386/25 or faster;
 4MB RAM; 20MB
 hard-drive space;
 DOS 5.0 or later;
 VGA

WE RECOMMEND

486; 8MB RAM;
 Supported sound
 cards; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

Few modern naval projects have been as dogged by controversy as the SSN-21 Seawolf. Designed as an heir to the workhorse *Los Angeles* class, the Seawolf faced problems ranging from prohibitive cost (\$1 billion each), to weld cracks in the hull, to the fact that the Soviet threat it was designed to counter has diminished substantially. Even its name was the subject of some controversy, since "SSN-21" (indicating "submarine for the 21st century") breaks the strict tradition of naming subs sequentially.

What is not in doubt is that the Seawolf, when completed within the next year, will be the finest submarine in the water. In speed, maneuverability, crew



The contour map is a graphic display of the ocean floor, meant to be used in hiding the sub from enemy sensors. It's fairly useless, though.

comfort, weapons loadout, sensors, and quietness, it outclasses the *Los Angeles* by a substantial margin. Able to maintain 20 knots while silent, packing a compliment of 50 weapons (including Mark 48 ADCAP torpedoes, mines, Sub-Harpoons, and Tomahawks), and achieving top speeds over 35 knots (*how much* over is still classified), this is one mean mother.

Electronic Arts' *SSN-21 Seawolf*, from the same people who created *688 Attack Sub*, brings the Seawolf to computer gamers for the first time. Pitting a single Seawolf against a renewed (and unlikely)

Seawolf has the looks and playability to make it a standout sub game, but sloppy mistakes keep it from being definitive.

Russian threat, SSN-21 manages to put the sub-mariner through many of the engagements this boat was designed for. The scenario provides a wide variety of missions, though it doesn't quite hold together. The story has hardliners in Russia taking over and lending support to a newly hostile Cuba, resulting in a steady escalation of tensions. Your single Seawolf is sent ranging across just about every open body of water in the world to conduct anti-shipping, anti-submarine, and information gathering in a series of 32 missions. A so-called "campaign mode" merely plays out each of these missions sequentially, adding some linking video clips to fill in the story.

These missions are centered around a main map display and conducted over a variety of "stations" on the Seawolf. The Conn station accesses basic game functions, ship status, and a logbook listing information on various vessels. Heading, waypoints, depth, targeting, and speed are handled in the SCP (for Ship's Control Panel) station, while weapons loading, unloading, and control is via the Weapons station. A Radio station provides some access to mission information, but is mainly used to communicate with other players in multiplayer mode.

The heart of *SSN-21*, however, is the Sonar station and waterfall display. A submarine lives or dies by how well it receives and processes sonar data. Sonar is the big ears of the submarine, constantly listening for the telltale sounds that other ships create, and this data is graphically and aurally represented in the waterfall. Separate, multi-colored displays help the gamer better understand the information coming into the waterfall. This color coding, combined with some fairly dense sound effects, enables you to determine the identity of each signal, sort out threats, and take any necessary action.

Once a vessel is identified, it appears on a main map display as an icon, with an information box listing bearing, speed, and



The periscope view shows a newly-launched Harpoon missile cruising for a surface vessel. A big explosion should be forthcoming.

depth. The map can be zoomed in or out, but the main information box is so big that a large portion of the screen is blocked out. Sub commanders will often find themselves removing and replacing the box throughout the game because of this needless and careless design flaw.

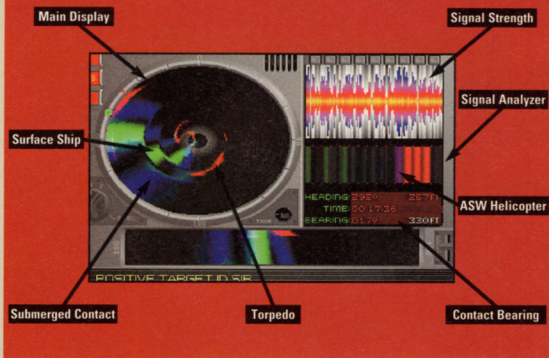


A Russian boomer (red V symbol) is attempting to hunt allied merchant ships (green circles), but the crew of the *Seawolf* has some plans of its own; four high-speed torps (green arrows) are closing rapidly on the boomer.

Speed, depth, and direction control are all fairly easy. Water has different temperature layers, known as thermals, which act as natural barriers to sound. One important part of submarine warfare is "riding the thermals," and *SSN-21* handles this with a simple up thermal/down thermal command, allowing the user to fairly easily hide beneath temperature layers and strike unseen.

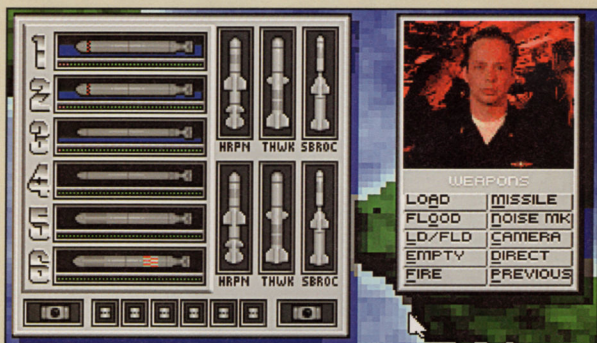
The Seawolf can also come to periscope depth to look around at the surface. Though the surface graphics are wonderful, using your periscope to see

In the sonar suite, different colors represent different sonar signatures. Here are the things to keep an eye on:



them can be risky in battle since it often betrays your position to the enemy; hardly advisable for the "assassin of ships," designed for stealth. The *Seawolf* carries two remote cameras, and these can be sent to the surface to send back black-and-white images of the carnage you're creating. There's also a contour map of the ocean, supposedly for use in hiding on the ocean floor, which I haven't found to be useful at all.

SSN-21's weapons compliment is perhaps its weakest point. With nary a word offered to explain the workings and use of each weapon, *SSN-21* offers us four types of torpedo and three types of surface-launched cruise missiles. The real *Seawolf* carries the Mark 48 torpedo, which can be set to run in a number of different ways — i.e. fast and short, or slow and long. In the game, though, you get a choice of four different sets of torps — High-Speed, Long-Range, Wakehoming, or Stasis torpedo. The Stasis torpedo is a mystery to everyone, since a) there is really no such thing and, b) it is useless in the game. The Stasis is launched, sleeps for a few minutes, then locks on to the nearest submerged target (usually you) and strikes. In the game, these torps are launched from



■ All six torpedo tubes are loaded with a variety of torps. The blue band beneath a tube means it's been flooded and is ready to fire. Video clips splice everything up a bit.

an array of six tubes. The real *Seawolf* has eight. The missiles in the game are only a little bit more accurate, as there are two Tomahawks (the *Seawolf* actually carries 12), two Harpoons, and a couple of Sea-Lances.

This game has the attractive graphics, great sound, and the basic design to be a winner, but it seems to have been rushed out the door before the loose ends were tied up. The unrealistic weaponry makes you wonder if the designers ever even glanced at a copy of *Combat Fleets of the World*, and the enemy offers weak response in many scenarios. And the documentation is really just plain bad.

As it is, *SSN-21* provides some initial fun and a fairly smooth interface. But it simply doesn't

hold up well in extended play or under close scrutiny — and that's a real shame, because with just a little more care and effort this could have been a terrific title. As it is, it's merely an entertaining one.

— T. Liam McDonald



■ The sea graphics and explosions look truly glorious.

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT**

HIGHS: Sweet graphics and sound; Modem play gives it life beyond its 32 scenarios.

75%

LOWS: Stupid interface decisions, spotty AI, bad campaign mode, and some unrealistic elements.

BOTTOM LINE: An entertaining game, but one that could have been so much better.

D-Day: The Beginning of the End

Category: War game
 Developer: Edward Grabowski/Impressions Software
 Publisher: Impressions Software, 222 Third Street Suite 0234,
 Cambridge, MA 02142

REQUIRED
 286; 640K RAM;
 4MB hard-drive
 space; Mouse.

WE RECOMMEND
 386; 4MB RAM;
 Supported sound
 cards

M.S.R.P. - \$69.95

Miniature war gaming, in which opponents use small figures instead of playing pieces to represent their forces, is an undying passion to those who have caught the bug. Some people will spend years collecting, painting, and expanding their miniatures collection, playing out battles by pushing these figures over a three-dimensional landscape, and referring to a sometimes mystifying set of rules.

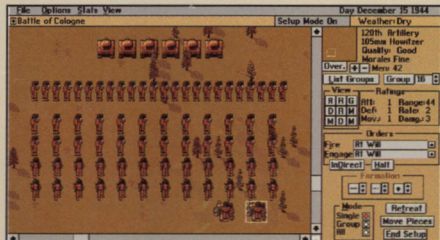
Several years ago, Edward Grabowski tried to capture this experience by creating a computer gaming system called "Micro-Miniatures" for the game *Fighting For Rome*. The idea was to reproduce the feel of miniature war gaming, and the fast movement of real-time combat. It didn't work. The poor resolution made distinguishing pieces and tracking a broad battlefield difficult, and the result was a confusing mess. Through several more games — *Conquests of Japan*, *Conquest II*, *The Blue and the Gray*, and, most recently, *D-Day: The Beginning of the End* — the graphics got better and refinements to the system

Micro-Miniatures gaming has come a long way. But is it well-suited to refighting modern battles like D-Day?

made playing much easier. But in the end, this refined Micro-Miniatures system succeeds most notably in revealing the weaknesses inherent in the miniatures concept. *D-Day* is a perfect case in point.

D-Day operates on two levels: campaign and Micro-Miniatures. The campaign game captures nicely the sweep of Operation Overlord, the largest amphibious operation ever undertaken. It begins with D-Day — the first landings to secure a beachhead at Normandy — and continues across Europe, merging land, sea, and air operations. You have your choice of airplane types, including fighters and heavy and medium bombers, to attack cities and units. Naval bombardment is available to support your land attacks. And your troops can move through a variety of terrains, along rail lines and roads, and be maneuvered into combat. All this, in a turn-based land campaign.

The three primary types of land unit that you control are infantry, armored, and artillery (though paratroopers, mech



A Micro battle begins promisingly, as you set up neat formations of men...



...but quickly dissolves into chaos as your troop formations completely unravel.

infantry, mech artillery, and engineers are also included), divided along vaguely historical lines into various divisions. These units can be ordered to do things like fortify their positions, board transportation, or destroy any standing structures in their map space.

This whole campaign aspect of the game works well. It's very easy to use, and built around a simple but well-rendered map. Everything you need is available at the click of a button, and essential information such as movement points, strength, and manpower is right on the screen. Reinforcement, supply, and division status are all neatly handled, too. The computer keeps a complete battle history, including dates, custom names for each battle, and casualties. Several starting points are offered, such as the Normandy beachhead, Battle of the Bulge, or the race for the Rhine. And while it may lack the depth of *Clash of Steel* or *High Command*, this campaign mode provides an excellent introduction to war gaming in and of itself. As a competitively priced beginner's war game, it could stand alone.

But the heart of *D-Day* is its real time Micro-Miniatures combat. Each time you attack or are attacked on the campaign level, you have the option to either resolve



Ironically, the non-Micro-Miniatures-based Campaign mode provides the most playable aspect of D-Day.

THE UNITS OF D-DAY



A row of artillery placed on a strategic hill...



...easily takes out a good corner of this town.



Micro-Minatures' almost-cute graphics, coupled with deadly serious game play, make for a bizarre juxtaposition.

the combat instantly or fight each battle out in miniature. In these miniature battles, little men and little tanks are lined up at opposite ends of a three-dimensional section of battlefield. Hills, trees, houses, water, open terrain, and even bocage (the networks of hedgerows and walls) dominate the map.

Each little figure represents a certain number of men, from a few for tank crews to several hundred in some infantry units. They can assume a variety of formations (line, double line, square, etc) and facings, and be ordered to move in a straight line anywhere on the map. Artillery and tanks are capable of honing in on individual targets. You can move all the pieces, large groups of them, or one at a time, and view them either close-up or from an overview map.

If the troops are still on ships, little landing vehicles bring them to shore. This



Landing craft head for the beaches—but will the soldiers get out?



American infantry (brown) square off against German (gray) on a crater-pocked battlefield.



American tanks hit near-invulnerable Panzers in the Battle of the Bulge.



Assorted units of American infantry prepares to cross Hitler's Atlantic wall.

presents a few problems, though, because often troops simply won't get off the landing craft. I've never heard of that being a problem on the real D-Day, since most men were violently sea-sick and itching to get out of the cramped transports.

Still, arranging these little guys into neat ranks and files and setting targets for them gave me hope for Micro-Minatures. It really is fun to move them around, and there's even an option for fog-of-war. It is all quite nicely put together and presented, and the hi-res graphics are effective.

But then combat starts. The men move in real time, walking across the landscape towards each other to engage in staggeringly ahistorical combat. (Napoleonic charges across open fields in WWII? Say what?) Their formations scat-

ter, they wander around the field, they attack in a confusing jumble of men and arms. The clock can be stopped and pieces given new orders whenever the need arises, but coming up with cohesive tactics is simply hopeless. And while directing each

little man is a laborious process, that's about the only way to really keep a grip on the action. This might encourage you to plan each movement very carefully before starting combat, but since troops can only move in a straight line, you can't set complex maneuvers. Say you want to execute a double envelopment, with several waypoints? Forget it.

As soon as those little guys start marching, everything starts to degenerate into vaguely controlled chaos.

Yes, I know combat is often that way. Yes, I know tactics often fall apart in battle.



Each battle ends with a screen, like this one, that notes the number of losses.

But if command-and-control was this bad in WWII, we never would have won.

A lot of care and attention went into this game, and the designers behind it obviously believe in its efficacy. But some better way of controlling units must be developed before the Micro-Minatures system can truly work—at least in operations as complex and multi-faceted as modern combat on a scale this large. Maybe something based along waypoints and designated engagements (i.e., Ally A fights Enemy C) would work, but massed formations just don't cut it in WWII.

Now that the Micro-Minatures system is coming into its own, though, it might be a very good time to take the engine back to its roots in ancient warfare, where rigid formations were the norm. In any case, *D-Day* is a good try, though the miniatures approach just doesn't work in this context. Grabowski and crew will no doubt continue to refine Micro-Minatures, and it'll be interesting to see what the future holds for this system—particularly if you can link it to a more suitable time period. After all, it's already come a very long way.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT** **PCG**

HIGHS: Simple interface, good graphics, and a fun Campaign game.

71%

LOWS: Micro-Minatures combat is often confusing, making tactics nearly impossible. Few battles are less suited to this kind of warfare system than D-Day.

BOTTOM LINE: Some interesting qualities, but they don't add up to a satisfactory whole.

Origamo

Category: Puzzle Game
 Developer: POP & Destiny Productions
 Publisher: POP, 495 Highway 202, Flemington NJ 08822

REQUIRED

386; 640K RAM;
 8MB hard-drive
 space; DOS 5.0;
 SVGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

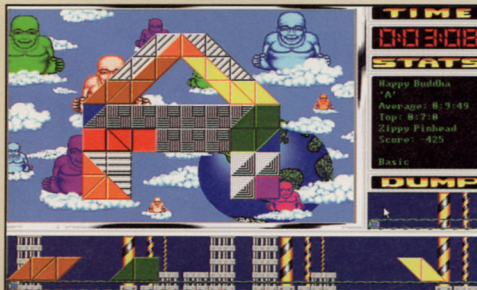
A really good
 mouse; Supported
 sound card

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

Origamo is a fast-paced puzzle game that challenges your hand-eye coordination as you fill in patterns using pieces of various shapes. Your ultimate goal is to work your way through the Maze of Eternity, a series of different rooms, one of which houses The Orb — your only ticket out of the Maze.

There's no secret as to which room the Orb is in, but to gain access to this room you must be given permission by Haji, but to gain access to Haji's room you must bring him some food, but to get food you must... well, I think you probably get the picture.

Here's how it works: The pieces roll out along a conveyor belt one after another — and you know that belt's not gonna stop. Just like Lucy trying to deal with all those cakes coming chugging down an assembly line, you'll need to move those pieces off the belt and into the pattern — but hurry! If the



Try to arrange pieces so that they'll occupy the least amount of space on the conveyor belt. Notice how the green piece will cozy up against the beige one at the far left?

There's no denying that this game will remind some people of Tetris — but there's nothing wrong with that.

belt fills up before you complete the pattern, you lose.

There are three puzzles to choose from in each room, ranging from downright easy to very difficult. On the difficult levels, not only are the patterns more complicated, but the conveyor belt also runs faster — it can be half full before you're able to grab a piece and place it. Luckily, the patterns are composed of different textured areas; by filling in an area, you clear out the conveyor belt and gain yourself some precious time.

Before you enter the Maze, you can select a Standard, Easy or Expert mode, but these only affect scoring. And if you

buddhas; some have Native American themes, and one is chock-full of characters from *Alice in Wonderland*. The music, much like you'd expect in a puzzle game, drones along pretty steadily, but does quicken or slow depending upon the pace and theme of each puzzle. (I swear I heard some Rolling Stones and The Residents mixed in there somewhere!)

Aside from the rate of speed, the conveyor belt introduces another set of intricacies. If you pick up a piece from the conveyor belt but can't use it at that time, you can place it on a second belt called the Dump, which feeds back onto the main conveyor. By using the Dump strategically,

My Favorite Backgrounds



The background graphics are one of the nicest parts of *Origamo*. Here are three of my favorites.

don't feel like playing through the maze, there's a Random option which lets you play one puzzle after another, trying to beat the previous fastest time.

The seven pieces used in the game are color-coded — triangles are blue, squares are purple, and so forth — to help you recognize them more quickly. The smallest shape, a triangle, can fit anywhere and is helpful in bailing you out when you're forced to place pieces haphazardly due to time constraints.

The background graphics are a real treat. Some of the richly colored rooms are adorned with Middle-Eastern and Asian architecture, as well pyramids, dragons, and floating

you can arrange the pieces along the belt so it will accommodate a greater number of the pieces, thus giving you more time before the belt fills up and more pieces from which to choose.

Sound like any game you've played before? The comparison to *Tetris* is unavoidable, but *Origamo* is different enough — and has been done well enough — to make it genuinely enjoyable in its own right. Besides, if you're gonna take your cue from another game, it may as well be a classic.

—Joe Novicki

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: One of the better *Tetris*-style games of late.

LOWS: If your mouse is sluggish,

you'll be frustrated; limited number of puzzles.

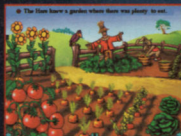
BOTTOM LINE: Plenty of options make *Origamo* accessible to all skill ranges, and the backgrounds and music spice things up nicely. Fun for a few minutes or a few hours — it's up to you.

78%



FEED YOUR BRAIN

Educate



The TORTOISE AND THE HARE BY BRODERJUNG

Inform



INTERNET TOOLS

Entertain



STAR TREK: 25th ANNIVERSARY BY INTERPLAY

We'd like to help you explore the world of CD-ROM

with our unique magazine + CD-ROM disc.

Read it. Use it. Be amazed by it.

For a FREE trial issue call 1-800-706-9500

Dept. CD7

CD-ROM *today*

The multimedia magazine from the publishers of *PC Gamer*.

We will send you a trial copy of *CD-ROM Today* with its own disc to review and also enter you on our subscription file for 11 more issues (12 in all) at \$49.95. After reviewing your first copy, if you're not pleased, just return our invoice marked "CANCEL" keep the trial copy and owe nothing.



X-COM

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE

Category: Strategy/Resource Management
Developer: Muthos Games Limited
Publisher: MicroProse, Inc., 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030

REQUIRED

386 33 or better; 4 MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

486; Sound Blaster compatible sound card

M.S.R.P. \$49.99

MicroProse's new, futuristic strategy title *X-COM* is reminiscent of the company's golden age of strategy, and along with *Master of Orion* it delivers a message of hope that those days of *Civilization* and *Railroad Tycoon* glory may be returning. Like the best of the genre, *X-COM* takes a simple idea, combines it with a simple interface, and magically produces a deep game filled with complex strategies and plenty of replay value. The graphics aren't the flashiest around, but don't let that turn you off before you get a chance to get stuck into the real meat of the game.

Based loosely on the early 70's TV series *UFO*, *X-COM* presents an image of extraterrestrial life that falls far short of the hopeful *E.T.* model. In the late 1990's, UFO sightings suddenly skyrocket. Scores of

Though it's not initially impressive, *X-COM's* varied game play makes it a sure-fire winner for any strategy fan.

human abductions and mutilations are reported, throwing an already nervous populous into total panic. By the end of 1998, the governments of the world can no longer hide the severity of the situation, and are forced to take action on a global scale. The UN's answer to the problem is the creation of the Extraterrestrial Combat Unit (*X-COM*), a force supported by all of the major governments of the world. As the head of this organization of unprecedented resources and firepower, you must keep the planet safe from alien attacks while trying to find a way to permanently end this assault from beyond.

Managing a military base with about 16 million dollars a month may not seem like that big of a problem, but in practice it's an executive's nightmare. The very future of the planet revolves around your



A lot of the action takes place in the base itself. From here you can hire new personnel, direct research, and keep track of your funding.



This is what you've been hired to take care of! Load up one of your strike craft with a set of troops, and start fighting!



When placing a new base, you have the whole world to choose from. Try to put yourself in some sort of central position where you can help as many different countries as possible.

ability to keep one or more bases filled with everything a strike team needs to wage war on your unknown opponents. Your soldiers will require living space, proper equipment and ammo, and, of course, their salaries. If you allow your funds to drop too low, you may find that you're unable to restaff after an unexpected defeat. On the other hand, if you're too stingy with the research and development dollars, your poorly armed and trained troops will start to march headlong into slaughter after slaughter.

One interesting component allows you to research the alien technologies (and the aliens themselves) that you find along the way. By studying the weapons, food sources, and assorted equipment of the enemy, your team can start closing the technology gap between your forces and theirs. But that economic juggling doesn't end just because you find some great new alien artifact. You'll have to hire scientists to study the artifacts, and they demand lab space and even more salary than soldiers.

X-COM — The combat system explained

MAP VIEW

Click here for an overhead view of the action. Very useful when your troops are spread out.

CHANGE VIEWING LEVEL

Clicking these buttons will cycle through the different levels of play.

VERTICAL MOVEMENT

These buttons will move your guys up and down if they're on an elevator or wearing a flying suit.

LEFT HAND ITEM

This shows a picture of the weapon or item being held in your left hand. Left clicking on this icon will bring up their item's options.

TIME RESERVATION ICONS

These buttons enable different time reservation plans that will save units for later turns.

KNEEL/STAND

Use this icon to change your character's stance. A kneeling soldier is harder to hit, and has an easier time shooting others.

CENTER SCREEN

It's easy to get confused when looking around for enemies. This will center the view back on your selected soldier.

CHARACTER INFO

This box shows all of your guys' stats and their rank.

SWITCH CONTROL 2

Similar to the above button, this icon will cycle to the next man, but will deselect the previous character for the rest of the round. Good for keeping track of who has moved and who hasn't.

OPTIONS

Takes you to a sub-screen with disk options.

INVENTORY

Left-clicking this icon will take you to a screen showing the possessions of the fighter. From this screen you can also pick up objects lying around.

SWITCH CONTROL

This will move you to the next closest character available for play. Use it if you wish to cycle through your men.

LEVEL VIEW TOGGLE

Used to switch between the two viewing modes. In split view, you can see through the roofs of buildings. In full view, you will see the top of structures, trees, etc.

END TURN

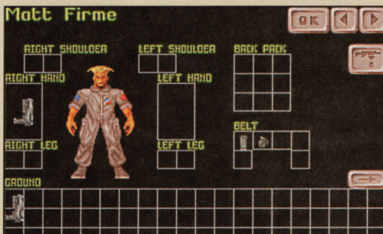
When all of your guys have moved, press here to move to the next round.

RIGHT HAND ITEM

Just like the other item icon, except it's for your right hand.

ABORT

If it's not looking good, use this icon to have remaining players on your ship leave the area. Sure it's cowardly, but it keeps you from losing the plane...



One of the best ways to keep up with who's who is to rename your troops after friends and neighbors. Hmm... I think a small hand gun will be enough for the boss; I'll save the rocket launcher for myself.

Then, to produce any of the items you've researched, you'll need a full complement of engineers and a workshop. Before you buy the first weapon for your team, you'll probably find that what seemed like an enormous amount of funding is in reality a mere pittance.

Money aside, the real challenge of X-COM is in acquiring an experienced fighting force well-equipped and healthy. Before the development of body armor, this can be an aggravating task at best. Even midway through the game, you'll find that your soldiers are consistently outnumbered, outgunned, and basically outclassed in combat. In the combat sequences, you view your soldiers (you can name each of them anything you like) from a top-down 3/4 view, with areas your forces haven't explored blacked out. You'll battle the aliens through the twisted floor plans of flying saucers, the burning husks of alien-controlled cities, the dark recesses of hidden enemy bases — and if you're not care-

ful you'll even see combat within your own compound. There are several different alien types, each with special powers that set them apart from the others. The longer you play, the more you'll learn about your foes — and the more entertaining and addictive the game becomes.

The last and perhaps greatest difficulty you must overcome is the cowardice of your own people. If you don't stop alien activity in a certain country, that country will reduce funding to your project. Screw up enough times, and that nation will pull out of the X-COM coalition all together, hoping that a pact with the aliens will give them preferential treatment under the "new management."

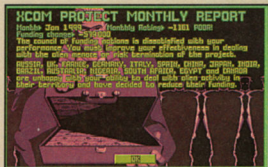
Overall, X-COM is one of the best titles to hit the strategy market for quite a while. Even though it doesn't have

Seckoid autopsy

The autopsy reveals visceral organs, the brain, and other structures. The brain and other organs vary and determine the alien's mental capabilities. The small mouth and nose appear to have little function. The antenna between the lips, and the fish tail, suggest possible origins. There are no reproductive organs, and no clues as to how this species can reproduce. They are most probably a genetically engineered species.



Aliens who are examined by your scientists usually don't fare too well...



This is not good. A few more reports like this one, and the whole world will give up hope.

astounding graphics or breathtaking sound, the game meets the most important criteria of all... it's a lot of fun. In a market that continues to place form over function, it's refreshing to see a title that instead places the emphasis firmly on the game itself. X-COM offers hours of engrossing, thoroughly enjoyable play, and I thoroughly recommend it to anyone who's looking for just that.

—Trent C. Ward

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The game play is just great. Custom characters, great story line, and simple combat interface make it completely absorbing.

LOWES: Graphics and sound are simple fare. It's not for those who want to be wowed by imagery.

BOTTOM LINE: Well worth buying — what it lacks in flash, it makes up for in playability.

88%

Alien Legacy

Category: Strategy/Adventure
 Developer: Creative Insights/Ybbara
 Publisher: Dynamix Inc., P.O. Box 495, Coarsegold, CA 93614

REQUIRED

386SX/20MHz; 4MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or later; 22MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

386DX/33MHz; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

Dynamix is at it again. After surprising the gaming world with their new spin on standard role-playing in *Betrayer at Krondor*, the company is taking a stab at the strategy genre. By combining the gameplay of *SimCity* or *Theme Park* with the unfolding plot line of a role-playing adventure, Dynamix has created a title in the tradition of such classics as

Starflight and *Star Control II*.

The virtual Earth has been through a lot of alien wars over the years, but in *Alien Legacy* there's a new twist—we lost. Up against the superior technology of the Centaurians, even the combined forces of the world really didn't stand a chance. Fortunately, there was another

Fans of *Star Control II* will love the look of this futuristic colony-building game, though it may prove too predictable for some.



There's an awful lot of work to be done at the colony level. One simple rule to keep in mind: Make sure you produce more resources than you use, or the colony will fold.

you is Gaea, a habitable planet. You don't know the fate of your sister ships, and you suddenly feel the weight of humanity's future resting on your shoulders.

Creating a new home for mankind is a pretty tall order, and you'll have to lean pretty heavily on your experienced crew to guide you through some of the early decisions. Of your all your aides—the scientist, the computer, the navigator, the engineer, and the military commander—the engineer will be of the most help in the early stages, advising you on the construction and control of colonies, the lifeblood of the game.

In order to survive, you must get several self-sufficient colonies built on the planet's surface quickly, so that the *Calypto* will have a place to send its human cargo. Each colony needs structures to produce the four components necessary to keep things up and running: ore, energy, life support, and robots. Ore gives you the base materials you need for constructing new devices, and can only be mined on a planetside colony with a factory. Energy runs the buildings and vehicles,

and is produced by power plants. Life support keeps folks breathing, and is produced by habitats. New robots, who are in charge of running and building the various



To get the big picture, take a look at the system from this space view. Clicking on any of the planets on the right side will bring up a closer view of that world.

colony structures, can be easily produced at any factory.

Also supplied by factories are the vehicles you'll need to explore your surroundings, defend your colonies, and to start new colonies on other planets. During your explorations, you'll discover the remnant of a human colony that landed here before you, and you'll have to search for clues to the cause of their mysterious disappearance. The tidbits of information you find will lead you on a search throughout the system, from inferno worlds near the sun to the frozen orbs that



On the planetary map, use your sensors to locate good, usable sources of natural ores and energy to get your colony up and running.

plan to ensure human survival—the creation of giant colony ships. By scattering these Leviathans across the galaxy, it was hoped that at least a few people would reach inhabitable worlds, and ensure the survival of the human race.

Early in the project, you were chosen as captain one of the vessels on its long journey. As the game begins, you awaken from the cryogenic hold of your vast colony ship the *UNS Calypto*, and there before



Vivid full screen animations like this one pop up to advance the plot from time to time. This particular rock-like alien seedship is about to make your life very miserable indeed.

rest at the edge of gravity's pull. Eventually, you'll have to figure out a way to defend yourself from whatever destroyed the earlier colony.

Alien Legacy doesn't just leave you alone to build and explore. You'll be tormented by natural disasters, mechanical failures, and the slow encroachment of furtive alien activity. In order to win, you'll have to think on your feet, react quickly, and show the decision-making skills of Solomon. Your staff won't always agree on the right course of action, and in making your choices you will almost certainly step on some toes. But that's part of the life of a starship commander.

Though the game is both well designed and visually strong, it does have its faults. Perhaps the

greatest is its unavoidable sameness. The storyline — particularly the external events that will affect your colonies — flows in the same way each time you play. The same things

always happen at the same time, and yet it's impossible to prevent them from happening. In fact, once you've experienced some disaster, you can play again and, knowing what's to come, plan some strategy to deal with it. You can't prevent the disaster, but you can be prepared.

Unfortunately, since you always know what's going to happen once you've



The tech manager keeps track of all your current projects and research. Don't skimp on the development or you'll fall behind other races and quickly find yourself up against an almost unbeatable enemy.



After landing on a sector, you'll pilot around looking for artifacts and resources.

Mankind's quest for the stars

If you like *Alien Legacy*, there are other games that you may want to try out. In EA's classic game of space exploration, *Starflight*, the people of Earth have relocated on a planet named New Arth, and their old homeland of Earth nothing but a faded memory. For some unknown reason, stars throughout the galaxy are going supernova, spreading like a deadly virus from system to system leaving nothing but flaming death in its wake. Now, New Arth lies directly in the path of the fiery doom, and you must find a way to stop it. Along the way you'll have to interact with the other races of the world, and explore the surfaces of strange worlds, looking for clues that will stop the destruction.

Accolade's *Star Control II* puts man in an even more dire situation. Captured and caged by a foul race bent on the subjugation of all others, the people of Earth look to you for an escape from certain death. Winning the game will take both diplomatic skills as you make treaties with other endangered races, and arcade skills when you find that some races just want to fight. In your wanderings you'll discover that being enslaved may not in fact be the worst fate that may await mankind.

played the game, there's just not much replay value. Some randomness would go a long way toward making this a real standout strategy game.

Another problem relates to the sheer complexity of the *Alien Legacy*, and the limited amount of time you have to tweak your colonies and make the many decisions required of you. The program uses a turn-counter, but since it clicks by on its own it might as well be a clock. So you end up with a real-time feel, and you have to rush from colony to colony, trying to make sure everything's working alright before one of those pre-ordained disasters occur. This can be a real challenge for experienced players, and can become pretty exciting if you really get into it, though that said it can also get unpleasantly overwhelming at times.

Even with these drawbacks, though, *Alien Legacy's* storyline adds a lot to the resource management/strategy core. The game controls are easy to learn and easy to use, though the game itself can be hard to follow. If you're a fan of strategy games, or a graphic adventurer who would like to try something new, this is a release worthy of your attention. If you're brand new to this kind of gaming, though, you'll probably find this one to be a bit too tough.

— Trent C. Ward

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Smooth and challenging, with solid graphics and an intriguing storyline.

80%

LOWS: The same things occur every time you play, so it can get too easy to cheat the fates.

BOTTOM LINE: A fresh new feel in strategy gaming — although the straight arrow storyline that makes it fresh also hurts replay value.

Kingdoms of Germany

Category: Wargame
 Developer: Realism Entertainment
 Publisher: Realism Entertainment, 6N 522 Pine Street, Bensenville, IL 60106

REQUIRED

386 or better; 2MB RAM; VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P. \$59.95

thing to rule the world? Perhaps you can settle for conquering a country, with Realism Entertainment's *Kingdoms of Germany*. In this sequel to the earlier *Vikings: Kingdoms of England II* (which didn't get wide distribution), up to six human or computer players (no modem options) carve out empires at each other's expense.

For those who like their war gaming fast and furious, *Kingdoms of Germany* is just the ticket. You create armies made up of different troop types, ranging from swordsmen and archers to mounted and non-mounted knights (you remember all those hitchhiking knights of yore, don't you?). They expand their empires by attacking and capturing neutral territories, and eventually the territories of their rivals. Even neutral territories can sometimes have pretty effective armies, so the warfare is of the attritional sort. You can't maneuver your armies and change tactics to effect the outcome of these battles, though; combat resolution is handled by the computer.

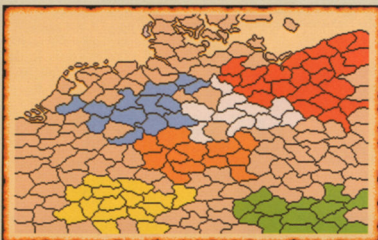
A crude economics system adds some extra flavor to the affair. Each territory you conquer is capable of producing stocks of food, wood, or stone, which are needed to build castles or sustain troops; surpluses



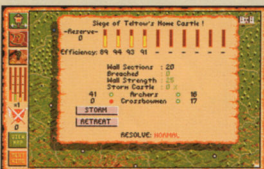
■ Players are strongest fighting near their home turf.

can be sold for extra cash. Taxes are your main source of income, though you can also mine territories in hopes of finding gold, silver, or iron. This means that areas with high tax values are naturally more valuable to own, and a player with a poor economic base will have problems creating the endless hordes needed to prosper.

Are you a fighter, not a lover? If so, your appetite for destruction will be well-fed by *Kingdoms of Germany*.



■ Whatever you do, don't get stuck playing as a country located in the center of the map. Look at all those enemies surrounding you!

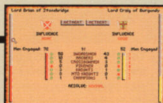


■ Sieges are crucial in *KoG*. Be sure to man your ramparts with lots of archers!

Kingdoms of Germany is easy to learn and easy to play. The graphics are only average, but the map screen is pleasant, and it scrolls very smoothly. Everything is point-and-click controlled, with pop-up menus detailing all your options. It's simplicity itself to build, move, and use your armies, and this makes the game more fun to play. The other side of the coin is that this ease of play comes at the expense of options, and players who enjoyed the many possibilities of *Civilization* or



■ Scroll-like menus pop up all over the place during the game to keep you well-informed.



■ This battle screen is about as close to real bloodshed as you're going to get!

Warlords II may be somewhat disappointed. There is no diplomacy, no computer-player personalities, no leaders—in fact, very few options. This is really just a basic wargame with plenty of battles.

In its favor, the computer opponents in *Kingdoms of Germany* are

highly aggressive, and smarter than their *Vikings* predecessors, though they will make the occasional dumb move. They're willing to run away to fight another day, so you have to plan carefully in order to really harm them. The best tactic is to isolate an enemy army and then attack, allowing it no avenue of retreat. On the higher levels, the computer players depend on advantages in resources, forcing you to hone your resource-management skills.

If you've played *Vikings*, you'll be able to hop right into *Germany* and start playing immediately. The two games are so similar, in fact, that if you have the first game it may not be worth your while to buy the second. They use different maps, obviously, which provides different strategic puzzles (the England map involves more sea activity, and easier defense; the Germany map is much more wide-open). And there are a few improvements in *Kingdoms of Germany*, such as quicker resolution of sieges. But for all practical purposes, they are the same game.

—Mark Pitcaughey

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The game's easy-to-learn, easy-to-use interface gets you into the fray fast.

77%

LOWS: There's not much in the way of chrome, and the relative simplicity of game play limits overall complexity.

BOTTOM LINE: A good, solid wargame—although perhaps not as detailed as it could be.

INTRODUCING VIVID3D. THE ULTIMATE IN GAME SOUND.

Get ready for the most realistic game adventure ever. The VIVID 3D™ sound enhancement system from NuReality transforms ordinary game sound into an amazing 3D sound experience. ★ What does "3D sound" mean? It means game sounds come alive all around you. It means you feel like you're in the front

row of a live concert. It means you'll never listen to your games the same way again. According to *Electronic Gaming Monthly* magazine, the VIVID 3D "redefines sound as we know it." ★ The VIVID 3D is easy to hook up to any Nintendo, Sega or

similar game system. You can also attach it to any computer equipped with a sound card. Thanks to award-winning* SRS (•)® sound enhancement technology, the VIVID 3D creates dynamic 3D sound from only 2 speakers. ★ For a store near you, call NuReality at **800-501-8086**. Why just play games, when you can be there? ★ NuReality, 2907 Daimler St.

Santa Ana, CA 92705-5810. Telephone: (714) 442-1080,

Fax: (714) 852-1059.

 **NUREALITY**



Product Information Number 161

Interplay's 10 Year Anthology: Classic Collection



Category: A little of everything
Developer: Interplay
Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine CA 92714

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive;
286/12MHz; DOS 3.3;
VGA, Hard-drive
installation

WE RECOMMEND

386; Mouse

M.S.R.P. \$59.99

In the volatile world of entertainment software, a ten-year anniversary is a real achievement. To celebrate its first decade in the computer gaming biz, Interplay has released *Interplay's 10 Year Anthology: Classic Collection*, a CD-ROM collection of ten titles that have made major contributions to Interplay's success.

The games run the gamut from old four-color text-and-graphics adventures to today's latest hits, and seeing the incredible evolution of computer gaming over the ten-year period represented on the disc is a real treat. The nostalgia alone is almost worth the price of the package, and a few of the very oldest titles are still remarkably enjoyable even after all these years.

And now, the inevitable List of Titles: First up, there's *Mindshadow* — still a great game, and my personal favorite. With its low-res, half-screen CGA stills and text, it's just a single evolutionary step ahead of the other text-adventure games (*Zork*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) that attracted so many to computer gaming in the first place. Next there's *Tass Times* — again CGA graphics and text, but now sporting a rudimentary point-and-click interface. An OK game. One of the most famous titles in the anthology is *Bard's Tale*, arguably the most important comput-

Celebrating a decade in the business, Interplay bring us a CD-ROM stuffed with famous blasts from the past.



Command > GO TO THE RIGHT.
An old story has been told and faded in the sand. It seems that you weren't the first tourist on this beach.

Mindshadow offered a single step beyond text-only adventuring with its CGA scenery.



Star Trek: 25th Anniversary is a terrific game, almost worth the price of the whole pack.

er role-playing game of all time. Tens of thousands cut their RPG teeth on *Bard*. Two other early RPGs, *Wasteland* and *Dragon Wars*, are also included.

The last five titles are more recent, and probably better known. There's *Battle Chess*, which incorporated animated battle sequences to liven up the capture of each game piece; *Lord of the Rings*, the top-down role-playing adventure based on Tolkien's works; *Castles*, which lets you

finance, build, and defend your own medieval fortress; *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, a top-notch graphic adventure recently re-released in an enhanced CD-ROM version; and finally *Out of This World*, a truly great action game that garnered plenty of critical praise for its fluid animations and wickedly tricky puzzles.

Whether or not this collection is worth buying largely depends on you, and on what software you already own. If you have *Out of This World* and *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, for instance, and you're not much interested in seeing



THIS IS your grandfather's main living area. It's a secluded, winterized log cabin, deep in the northern woods. The dining table has an order slip from the local pizzeria. Just a letter, lying on the floor.

Tass Times is interesting for its very early — and a bit primitive — graphical interface.



This still shot from *Out of This World* might look blocky, but in motion it's incredible.

what computer gaming was like years ago, then this package might not hold much value for you.

All things considered, *Interplay's 10 Year Anthology: Classic Collection* is a good collection. It's certainly more than just shovelware, although the games included have not been enhanced for CD-ROM. Not every title is an earth-shaker, and none of them will live up to today's CD sound-and-graphics extravagance. If you're looking for cutting-edge stuff, pass this one by. But if you want to relive (or discover) the history of computer gaming, it's a collection worth having.

—Matt Firms

Welcome to Garth's Equipment Shoppe, oh wealthy traveller! Which of you is interested in my fine wares?

(EXIT)

Character Name	AC	Hit	Con	SPR	CL
BRIAN THE FIST	30	30	30	30	30
SAMSON	30	30	30	30	30
EL SID	30	30	30	30	30
MARQUIS	30	30	30	30	30
MERLIN	30	30	30	30	30
OMAR	30	30	30	30	30

If you've been gaming since the early days, you probably know our friend Garth very well. He's a shopkeeper from *Bard's Tale*.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

83%

HIGHS: A great collection for nostalgia fans, with some surprisingly playable old titles.

LOWS: If you already have the two newer titles, the rest might not be worth the asking price.

BOTTOM LINE: A solid collection, and one of special value to those with a serious interest in the history of PC gaming.

Tigers on the Prowl

Category: War game
 Developer: Scott Hamilton/HPS Simulations
 Publisher: HPS Simulations, P.O. Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055

REQUIRED

286; 640K RAM; 2MB
 hard-drive space;
 VGA

WE RECOMMEND

486; Supported sound
 cards; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

Tigers on the Prowl lets you relive one of the greatest conflicts ever — but wading through the interface may be the real battle.

cratering, vehicle dust clouds, and less tangible factors such as morale. Like the paper war game Squad Leader (which *Tigers* sometimes resembles), units can break or go berserk. There really is a lot of historical and military detail, and these factors might make *Tigers* a must-buy for dedicated tactical war gamers.

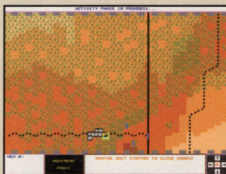
But *Tigers* is so cumbersome that potential purchasers should approach the game carefully. Although it is mouse-driven and utilizes pop-up menus, the interface is reminiscent of early 1980's war games. The graphics are crude, the main map screen redraws each time you move rather than scrolling, and the game is slow even on a 486. Scenario information is available

The 1990's equivalent of Marshall McLuhan's famous saying, "The medium is the message," is probably "Interface is everything." Slick but shallow computer games often receive more accolades than those programs that only offer "heart." Still, there are reasons to demand a good interface — and HPS's newest release, *Tigers on the Prowl*, a simulation of WWII Eastern Front tactical warfare, illustrates that

point all too well.

Scott Hamilton (well-known for his *Aide-de-Camp* wargaming aid) has designed a simulation that contains a wealth of detail. But the impact of that detail is severely handicapped by a very cumbersome interface.

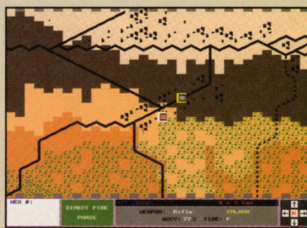
If you're looking for tanks to command and guns to deploy, *Tigers* offers them up by the car-load. The game simulates hundreds of weapons, tanks, and even planes, from Polish 65mm artillery to Soviet T-34's (five variants) to, naturally enough, German Tigers. Moreover, *Tigers* takes into account illumination, fires, weather,



The middle zoom level is the easiest way to view the terrain and units.

only in a READ.ME file. Perhaps more seriously, the game lacks simple features that would have made it much easier to play. For instance, you can't readily identify which enemy targets your unit can actually see. You can't cycle through your units to give them commands; instead, you must select each unit separately (at the

risk of forgetting a unit). And there's no option for watching enemy movement — even when the enemies are visible. These problems make playing the game less enjoyable, and so do other factors. *Tigers* includes command and control delays — it takes a while before your units receive and act on your commands, so air strikes and artillery barrages take time. Fair enough, but the game is turn-based, with each turn representing one minute of real time; it might take a dozen turns before artillery arrives, or eight turns before your units begin to move. This is too long to wait when playing a game. To paraphrase James Dunnigan, the well-known war game designer, a good game should provide at least the illusion of movement. In *Tigers*, there's just too much sitting around. A time-scale of three minutes per turn would have preserved the tactical



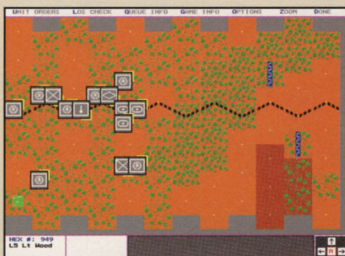
The computer only shows firing unit and target when displaying combat results.

feel, and lessened the waiting time. There's an option to lessen the delay time, but this alters the realism that delays bring to the game.

Despite the great historical detail, the modeling of tactical combat is sometimes questionable. Computer-controlled units seem reluctant to open fire on nearby enemy units. They can cross open fields swept by enemy machine-gun fire rather readily, though. Mortars seem unrealistically powerful, and victory conditions are generic and have no historical basis.

The good news is that HPS constantly tweaks its products, so you can expect updates that respond to specific consumer suggestions. That support, combined with *Tigers*' suitability for play by mail and the fact that *Aide-de-Camp* owners can use that program to modify the maps and values here, all bring value to the game. In the end, devoted tactical war-gamers should at least consider hunting this particular Tiger.

— Mark Pitcavage



Watch out for hidden enemies when you travel down a road.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: More guns and tanks than you can shake a panzerfaust at.

LOWS: Let's face it — even Zhukov might get frustrated trying to move these units.

BOTTOM LINE: A wealth of detail, but badly in need of plastic surgery. Game play is too cumbersome for all but hard-core war-gamers.

Bridge Baron for Windows



Category: Bridge Simulation
 Developer: Great Game Products Inc.
 Publisher: Great Game Products Inc., 8004 Chalon Dr., Bethesda, MD 20817

REQUIRED
 Windows 3.0 or later; 286; 1MB RAM; 1.2MB hard-disk space; EGA/VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND
 386SX/16MHz; 2MB RAM; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$49.95

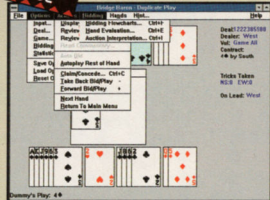
There are literally so many options that I can't list them all, though here are some of the best and most helpful. Setting up single hand, rubber bridge, or duplicate bridge game is a breeze. Full matches against either a friend or the program, using up to 16 tables, are offered. You can also select several scoring methods and bidding conventions (Stayman, Blackwood, Gerber, plus many optional ones).

Of course, you can review, take back, skip or auto-play bids and hands, claim or concede hands, and other basic stuff. And what about hints, you say? You not only get hints, but you can also view an evaluation of your hand or just view something different than he would have.

Also included are the Sheinwold Bridge Challenges, a selection of 24 deals designed by Alfred Sheinwold to test your skill and improve your ability to solve difficult situations, which add a lot of replay value to the game. And a Personal Play Library lets you save and replay deals from *Baron*, or input deals from tournaments, newspaper columns, books, or elsewhere.

Want more? Then you'll want to check out the Bridge Competition, giving you the opportunity to earn credits towards Great Game Products stuff!

The manual says each new version of the *Bridge Baron* series gets better



Through this simple Windows interface the multitude of options are easily accessible.

and better, and I must agree. If bridge is your game, *Bridge Baron* for Windows is the name.

— Joe Novicki

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Basic strength of play is its best feature — but there's so much more.

LOWES: If you don't like bridge, there's nothing here for you. But any faults beyond that would be petty nit-picking.

BOTTOM LINE: Stacked with well-thought-out features, *Bridge Baron* really delivers.

88%

Great Game Productions just did a smart thing with *Bridge Baron* for Windows. They took *Bridge Baron V*, already a top-notch bridge sim, and added a Library, the Sheinwold Bridge Challenges, and a friendly Windows interface. The result is the best bridge game on the market — bar none.

At the programs' heart is that *Bridge Baron V* engine. It claims to be the strongest program written for bidding and playing, a claim I'd take seriously. And just as serious are all the assorted options at hand, from help and tutorials to the flexibility to set up just about any type of bridge game or situation possible.

Pursue the Pennant

Category: Sports Simulation
 Developer: Tippett Software
 Publisher: Pursue the Pennant, P.O. Box 19703, Greensboro, NC 27419

REQUIRED
 IBM-compatible; 640K RAM; 1.5MB hard-disk space

WE RECOMMEND
 286 or faster (to speed up season replays)

M.S.R.P.: \$79.95

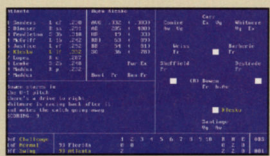
ups, rotations and make all the necessary on-field calls.

Like the power of the game itself, most enhancements in version 5.03 are invisible. Many play descriptions have been added, so there's little of the repetition that marked earlier versions. And there are a few rare plays thrown in to add some spice to the play-by-play.

Other new features include weather conditions, an expanded stats report, and even such details as the heights of walls in foul territories.

The beauty of *Pursue the Pennant* is unchanged: It produces the most realistic replay results I've ever seen in a baseball sim, with just enough variance thrown in to keep things interesting — just like in real life.

All this adds up to a very impressive release. Hats off to these guys. By



The game screen isn't fancy, but it's packed with all the info a manager needs.

listening to what their customers want, they keep improving an already fine game. If you're at all serious about baseball, you owe it to yourself to check out *Pursue the Pennant*.

— Lee Buchanan

Looking for a baseball game with fancy graphics, crack-of-the-bat sounds and maybe the voice of your favorite announcer calling the play-by-play? Or do you want realism? Hard-core baseball fans will choose the realism every time, and I've got good news for them. One of the best text-only baseball simulations, *Pursue the Pennant*, just got better with the release of version 5.0. The most recent upgrade, 5.03, fixes a few bugs and is thought to be the final 5.0 version.

The no-frills display of *Pursue the Pennant* hasn't changed. Sure, it's just text, but don't knock it — that text provides you with all the basic information you need to manage a Major League Baseball team. You handle rosters, line-

METS		BRUINS		Mets vs Bruins	
Runs	10	10	10	10	10
ER	10	10	10	10	10
IP	9	9	9	9	9
W	1	1	1	1	1
L	1	1	1	1	1
SV	1	1	1	1	1
SH	1	1	1	1	1
HR	1	1	1	1	1
RBI	1	1	1	1	1
OBP	1	1	1	1	1
SLG	1	1	1	1	1
OPS	1	1	1	1	1
WAR	1	1	1	1	1
WAR*	1	1	1	1	1
WAR2	1	1	1	1	1
WAR3	1	1	1	1	1
WAR4	1	1	1	1	1
WAR5	1	1	1	1	1
WAR6	1	1	1	1	1
WAR7	1	1	1	1	1
WAR8	1	1	1	1	1
WAR9	1	1	1	1	1
WAR10	1	1	1	1	1
WAR11	1	1	1	1	1
WAR12	1	1	1	1	1
WAR13	1	1	1	1	1
WAR14	1	1	1	1	1
WAR15	1	1	1	1	1
WAR16	1	1	1	1	1
WAR17	1	1	1	1	1
WAR18	1	1	1	1	1
WAR19	1	1	1	1	1
WAR20	1	1	1	1	1
WAR21	1	1	1	1	1
WAR22	1	1	1	1	1
WAR23	1	1	1	1	1
WAR24	1	1	1	1	1
WAR25	1	1	1	1	1
WAR26	1	1	1	1	1
WAR27	1	1	1	1	1
WAR28	1	1	1	1	1
WAR29	1	1	1	1	1
WAR30	1	1	1	1	1
WAR31	1	1	1	1	1
WAR32	1	1	1	1	1
WAR33	1	1	1	1	1
WAR34	1	1	1	1	1
WAR35	1	1	1	1	1
WAR36	1	1	1	1	1
WAR37	1	1	1	1	1
WAR38	1	1	1	1	1
WAR39	1	1	1	1	1
WAR40	1	1	1	1	1
WAR41	1	1	1	1	1
WAR42	1	1	1	1	1
WAR43	1	1	1	1	1
WAR44	1	1	1	1	1
WAR45	1	1	1	1	1
WAR46	1	1	1	1	1
WAR47	1	1	1	1	1
WAR48	1	1	1	1	1
WAR49	1	1	1	1	1
WAR50	1	1	1	1	1

The stats reports tracks league leaders in just about any category you can think of.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Full rosters, realistic results and statistics — and all in a flexible, easy-to-play game.


LOWES: They could have spruced up the display a bit. But nah, why bother?

BOTTOM LINE: You can't ask for anything more from a text-only baseball sim.

84%

ARM YOURSELF

JOIN THE ELITE OF THE
INTERPLANETARY BATTLE CIRCUIT.



PILOT YOUR
ZEPHYR
BATTLECRAFT
TO VICTORY
OR GO OUT
IN A BLAZE
OF GLORY...

YOUR SKILL WILL
DETERMINE THE
OUTCOME.

ZEPHYR™

To order *ZEPHYR* call (800) 325-8898.

Product Information Number 241

© 1994 New World Computing, Inc. *ZEPHYR* is a trademark of New World Computing.
New World Computing is a registered trademark of New World Computing, Inc. All rights reserved.

NEW WORLD COMPUTING, INC.

Mein Gott! Wolfenstein!

Finished all of *Doom* already? Played through *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Spear of Destiny* so many times you shout *Spartan!* in your sleep? Need a quick fix, you carnage junky you? Rest easy, because **FormGen** is feeding your addiction with a couple of new, unofficial levels for *Spear of Destiny*. Available separately, *Mission 2: Return to Danger* and *Mission 3: The Ultimate Challenge*,

put B.J. Blazkowicz back in the line of Nazi fire.

It appears that Hitler, diedhard that he is, has sent Hans "The Axe" von Schlieffen and some storm troopers to America to get the *Spear of Destiny* back. Only Hans — reminiscent of the Death Knight, with a skull for a head — returns, and he has the spear. It's Blazkowicz's job to get it back in *Return to Danger*, and put an end to Hitler's atomic research project. You'll go up through a submarine pen and through 19 more levels to get the spear, meeting the lobotomized Submarine Willy, the demented Professor Quarkblitz, Hans, and a killer robot with a pair of chainguns and a couple of rocket launchers. As if that weren't enough, there are dobermans, lots of lethal bats (with machine guns attached to their feet!), some ghosts, and the Devil Incarnate to wrap

things up with a big bang. The levels are complex and clever, with a new look and some new wall types, but not incredibly difficult. The incredibly difficult levels were saved for *Mission 3*.

Hitler is back and looking to the devil for power in *Mission 3: Ultimate Challenge*, and it's up to B.J. to infiltrate the Fuhrer's bunker and do some major damage. The creatures are the same, and the Devil shows up at the climax again. This one could have used something a little more, but it still works because some of the levels — another 20 — are fiendishly complex. You'll be dizzy and broken by the end of this one.

Spear, but does let you set specs for randomly redesigning the levels in all three missions. You can determine the number of regular bad guys and big bad guys, amounts of ammo and health, and level of general difficulty, then the program remakes each level to your to the info. If they make one of these for *Doom*, we won't see Matt again!

The Super CD Pak is a great package for the *Wolfenstein* hound, and these new levels will keep 'em sweating bullets for a while.

The Blue and the Gray Impressions and designer Edward Grabowski are

famous for their Micro-Miniatures war games, which aim to recreate the look and feel of the old table-top miniature gaming. The latest Micro-Miniatures title, *D-Day: The Beginning of the End*, is reviewed in this issue, and now Impressions is releasing a new add-on to *D-Day's* Civil War-era predecessor, *The Blue and the Gray*, that brings three new battles and full modern support to the game. Packaged under the uninspired title *Data Disk Number One*, this add-on doesn't actually offer new campaigns, just new Micro-Miniatures set-ups and landscapes. Grabowski offers us a major Confederate victory (Second Battle of Bull Run), a shaky draw (Antietam), and a major Union victory (Gettysburg), providing a solid mixture of combat approaches and styles. From Lee's boldly divided forces at Bull Run and stubborn attack in the face of bad odds at Gettysburg to McClellan's inaction at Antietam, these are good battles to play armchair general with, allowing you to make different decisions than were made historically.

Along with new battles, you also get modern support for head-to-head play, including a simple connection menu (accessed from a different executable) and player-to-player messaging screen. The modern support makes skimpy AI a moot point as you clash against a human player.

Those new CD-ROMs

Dynamax has brought the award-winning *Betrayal at Krondor* to CD-ROM with some interesting touches — and some interesting failings. As with most ports to CD-ROM, the soundtrack has been thoroughly retooled, and it really does sound pretty sharp. In addition, an extensive Video for Windows file, featuring an interview with *Krondor* creator and author Raymond E. Feist, is also included. It's an interesting and well-produced glimpse into the creative process, though not as elaborate as the "making of" included with programs like *Myst* and the

T. Liam McDonald

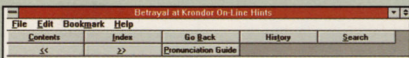


These new missions are available separately, or as a very nifty Super CD Pak. The CD includes the base game, both mission sets, hint books (with complete maps) for each mission, and **Infinite Carnage's Game Creator**. The *Game Creator* doesn't let you to build your own levels for

Tom McDonald takes a look at new add-on disks for the excellent *Spear of Destiny* and *The Blue and the Gray*, plus assorted CD-ROM versions of old favorites — and all the latest bug patches, too.



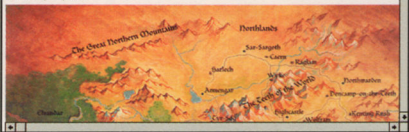
Adding full modern support and three new battles, the new *Blue and the Gray* mission disks will keep Civil War fans busy for a long time.



The Map of Midkemia

When you move the mouse cursor around the map, it will change from an arrow to a hand when it is positioned over an area of certain interest. Clicking the left mouse button on these areas will transport you to an appropriate section of this file.

NOTE: Some locations have more than one hot-spot. You can tell when a location has multiple hot-spots by moving the mouse cursor across the name of the area. The cursor will change from a hand to an arrow, then back to a hand again. As an example, if you are looking for information on what is located East of Crawl Keep, you would choose the hot-spot furthest to the right (East), of the 4 available hot-spots on the Crawl Keep map label.



New to the CD-ROM version of *Kronador* is the option to call up on-line hints and tips via a new help screen. Hey — you'll never be stuck again!

forthcoming *11th Hour*. An even better treat for CD-ROM owners is a complete, online hint book.

Notably lacking, however, is any voice-support — something Dynamix parent Sierra On-line has done extensively on CD-ROM. It's a curious and disappointing loss for this ponderously text-heavy game, and detracts considerably from its value. Still, it's largely playable from the CD, and is recommended mostly for those who haven't tried it yet.

Electronic Arts has put both *Syndicate* and *American Revolt* on a single, economical-priced CD called *Syndicate Plus*. The original *American Revolt* add-on disk could only be played with a cumbersome zipping/unzipping process that got rid of the original game. Now, both the original and the add-on are available from a single front-end. Better yet, they are completely, and smoothly, playable from the CD.

Piers Anthony's world of magic talents and heroic quests has also made its way to CD. In *Legend's* new *Companions of Kyrandia* CD, you take on the role of a skeptical young man who's been thrown into a battle between two god-like demons.

Very similar in design to *Legend's* other graphic adventures, *Companions* uses a simple interface to guide you through your travels. To win

the game, you must grab items you find along the way and use them to overcome the many obstacles in your path. Along the way you'll have to resist the temptations of a sultry demonesse, escape a steam-breathing dragon, and find your way into a powerful magician's castle. The entire game is filled with pleasant imagery, detailing the strange plants and animals that fill the land of Xanth.

The main difference between the floppy and disc versions of *Companions* is the addition of voice acting. The actors all sound pretty much

like they should, and do a good job of fleshing out the characters in the game.

BUG PATCHES

(Contact game publishers for bug patch availability)

Pacific Strike v. F1.19 — Nine fixes, including better AI for divebombing and minor frame rate enhancements.

Aegis v.1.0 — Fixes the "General CD Failure" error, and repairs the problem of crashing to DOS after entering the Electronic Book.

Doom 1.4 — Get ready, modem-Doomers: Jay Wilbur of ID Software says this new patch fixes "boat-loads of bugs," most related to head-to-head play. There is no longer a

"You'll meet the lobotomized Submarine Willy, the demented Professor Quarkblitz... and Hans 'The Axe' von Schlieffen."

9600 limit on baud rate in modem play, and serial connect code has been extensively revised to fix problems. Users have also sent in tons of modem initialization batch files, so that almost every available modem is now supported. The mouse code has been cleaned up, and extensive testing is going on as we go to press.

El-Fish — has a patch for people having trouble running in Hi-Res mode, or on Pentiums.

Jutland — This patch now allows the game to recognize sound-card address other than 220.

Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos v. 1.23 — Corrects problems associated with Dawn's Key, as well as



Spear of Destiny is given a whole new lease on life by two new mission disks.

lockups when choosing a character on some Pentium and DX2-66 machines.

Ravenloft v. 1.1 — Fixes random-crash bugs, while 1.2, due out soon, fixes problems with ranged weapons not hitting their targets, as well as the problematic "jeweler bug," if you meet the jeweler in Barovia before you get the key to the cemetery, you'll experience crashes and other problems. There are separate patches for CD-ROM and disk versions.

Rebel Assault v. 1.7 — Corrects random lockups and "unexpected interrupt" messages. It also enables the game to work better

with systems that have 16 MB RAM or more, adds brightness controls, a boot-disk creator, and improved joystick control.

Subwar 2050 v. 2.02 — Patches cursor drift, as well as the time and date problem.

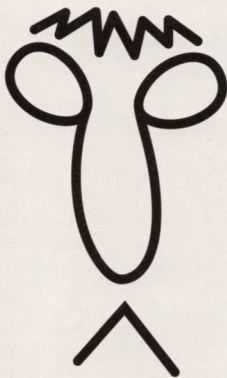
The Horde v.1.1 — Now supports Media Vision's Pro Audio line of sound cards. This patch also fixes freeze-ups when using some Sony CD-ROM drives that would not play the CD music properly, as well as freezes during the first building stage in the Shinto Plains. It also slows the scrolling of the End Credits, and a glitch in which archers and knights would not disappear after being killed by large snowballs in the Frozen Wastes of Vesh.

Ultima VIII — A patch to fix errors found with the AdLib sound card.



Also new to the CD-ROM *Kronador* is this Video for Windows file, featuring an interview with creator Raymond E. Feist.

Before.



This Fall, five very exciting new games will cheer you up considerably: Quarantine, Hell, Frontier-1st Encounters, Bureau 13, and Star Crusader.

After.

"If You Program It, They Will Play..."

In the realm of PC games, sooner or later you get what you wish for. New technology opens up new possibilities, old genres become over-worked and start to fade, and fresh ones appear to take their turn on the electronic stage. I wonder, just in passing, how many more jet warplane sims the market will tolerate, now that every important aircraft in all the worlds' arsenals has been simmed and re-simmed.

When I first started reviewing war games in 1987, everything looked wonderful to me. But it wasn't long before I started a mental "wish list" of war games and simulations I wanted to see. At the top: realistic World War Two naval combat, closely followed by some rugged, blood-and-guts tank simulations from the same period. Both wishes came true eventually — and recently.

When the editors asked me what game was highest on my current wish-list, I was tempted to say I'd like to see a simulation that lets me get into the former Yugoslavia and settle the bloody affair! A "War in Bosnia" simulation will inevitably appear, of course, but for the moment, the heartbreaking footage on CNN is as much

as I can handle, either emotionally or professionally.

Coincidentally, though, the number one choice on my war-gaming wish list deals with a conflict remarkably similar to the war now raging in the former Yugoslavia. I refer to the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from July 1936 to March 1939. It was a dress rehearsal for World War Two, which makes it interesting from a technological point of view, and it was the last "romantic war," a very good angle from which to hang a simulation.

Why romantic? Well, the good guys were the democratically elected Republicans, and the bad guys were the Fascist Nationalists under Franco.

William R. Trotter



Both sides were under the same sort of arms embargo as the one now in place in the Balkans, but it was the

Republicans who suffered from it, because the West chose to ignore violations by Hitler and Mussolini, who openly supplied Franco with masses of heavy weaponry.

Most notable among the Fascist formations was Germany's Condor Legion, a 6000-man force sent in to try out new tactics and new weapons under battlefield conditions. It was the Condor Legion that perfected the use of the Stuka, the Messerschmidt BF-109, and the deadly 88 mm. cannon. Today the unit is chiefly remembered for a single atrocity, one which inspired one of Picasso's most famous paintings: the bombing of a defenseless village named Guernica.

The Republican government was a jello-souffle of incompatible and incompetent Leftist factions: Socialists, Syndicalists, Communists, Anarchists, romantic writers, and cold-blooded commissars. It could never get its act together because of constant internecine bickering. For a couple of years, the Republicans got their share of heavy arms because Stalin wanted to try out his new tanks and planes, too. But he sent just enough to prolong the war, and never enough to win it.

What the Republic did have was passion. From every western country came thousands of idealists, adventurers, labor unionists, poets, and jour-



The town of Guernica after Germany's Condor Legion used their new Stukas on it.

nalists. These formed the legendary International Brigades, and what they lacked in training and firepower they made up in sheer courage. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a formation of American volunteers, spearheaded virtually every successful Republican attack from mid-1937 to the collapse of resistance in March, 1939. Sixty percent of the American volunteers died in Spain. Willingly.

Given this kind of raw material, the Republic should have won. A simulation which allows for the many political and diplomatic possibilities — such as lifting the arms embargo, putting a competent Republican government in charge of things, and hiking the importation of Red Army tanks and howitzers by ten percent or so — would be fascinating. With just a small tweak here and another tweak there, the war could have gone in many different directions.

Above all, a simulation of the Spanish Civil War would have atmosphere. I can envision a CD-ROM version with on-line readings of Ernest Hemingway's dispatches from Madrid, exciting newsreel footage of the Siege of the Alcazar, and a soundtrack of blood-stirring folk songs recorded by Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger in a bunker outside Barcelona.

Who would buy it? I'll bet you'd be surprised. It's such a marvelous historical period, so ripe with possibilities, that war gamers just might flock to the game in droves.

And if they don't, I've got a few other suggestions that might work...

We've had our fill of tank sims and strategy games based on well-known conflicts. Now what we need are a few more imaginative scenarios, says Bill Trotter...



LA UNIDAD EJERCITO PUEBLO
SERÁ EL ARMA DE LA VICTORIA

Republican recruiting posters attracted idealists from across the western world.

NOW INCLUDES
an **MPEG** version
of **The Horde!**



You've got the sound.
You've got the CD-ROM.
Now get the picture with ReelMagic Lite!

You've got the 16-bit sound card and CD-ROM drive—now all you need is ReelMagic Lite to join the MPEG revolution! ReelMagic Lite is

ReelMagic Lite

the world's first MPEG video playback card. It will change the way you look at multimedia forever, at a price you can afford today.



The MPEG process delivers 200:1 monster data compression for full-screen, full-motion TV-quality video, along with CD-quality audio playback—

	30 fps MPEG video playback	CD-quality MPEG audio	Ad Lib. DMS game compatible	Dual Speed CD Drive	Stereo Speakers
ReelMagic Lite	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ReelMagic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ReelMagic Multimedia Kit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Plays popular Sound Blaster™-compatible games.

all from your standard CD-ROM drive. That's what gives your interactive MPEG entertainment "walk-in" realism and puts your favorite movies on CD-ROM.*

GET THE PICTURE WITH MPEG

The MPEG experience sets the new industry standard in visual excitement—send *Top Gun* rocketing across your entire screen or watch the first lunar landing on *Compton's*® interactive encyclopedia! And many more next-generation ReelMagic MPEG interactive entertainment and movie titles are on the way. As an added bonus, when you get ReelMagic Lite you'll also receive the MPEG version of a thrill-packed, live-action adventure game FREE!

Call 1-800-845-8086 ext. 406 for your nearest ReelMagic dealer—and blaze into the future now with MPEG!



These are just a few of the many exciting ReelMagic titles available now.

*Call Sigma Designs to inquire about CD-ROM drives compatible with movies on CD. MPEG, the Motion Picture Experts Group, is the industry standard for data compression and decompression. © 1994 Sigma Designs, Inc. The Sigma Designs logo is a registered trademark, and ReelMagic is a trademark of Sigma Designs, Inc. All other brand and product names are property of their respective owners. Specifications subject to change without notice.

New Angles on Old Ideas

There's one nice thing about reviewing educational software: I never know what will spark my fancy. I might look at three or four programs and think, "These are okay, but I've seen this done before. Is this all there is to look forward to in educational software?" Then a package stands me on my head, gives me a new perspective, and I get excited all over again.

This month, three packages turned me around in some way or another, and renewed my faith in the growth of educational software. For example, I was about to swear off interactive stories for a while. Tired of the same old gads, mediocre plots, and predictably cartoonish graphics, I felt like I'd had my fill of these programs. Some are excellent, but their impact has been lessened by the sheer number of similar titles on the market — they were all starting to look alike.

Because I received only the CD-ROM for *Sitting on the Farm*, I wasn't aware that it fell into this genre. So I checked it out — and now I'm ready to take on any CD-ROM story that comes my way. I know they can still be entertaining and fresh, even without all the latest bells and whistles.

Sitting on the Farm: Simple Yet Effective

Sanctuary Woods' latest offering in its Learn line is *Sitting on the Farm*, a rhyming story of a girl and her parade of hungry animals, aimed at kids 7 to



Unusual perspectives really bring the already attractive artwork in *Sitting on the Farm* to life.

11. The story is told four different ways. In the simplest mode, a narrator reads the story, as the pages are turned automatically. The second mode lets kids read the story at their own pace — clicking on words to hear them read aloud, using mouse clicks to activate simple animated sequences, and so on. The third mode sets the story to music, and lets kids select instruments and voices to perform the song, and even record themselves singing along if they have a microphone hooked up to an input on the sound card. Finally, the children can rewrite the story with new settings and new animals, and then set their cre-

ly wonder what animal the girl will call on next, and how big the last one will be — will it fit on the poor girl's lap?

But this plot wouldn't be as entertaining without the pictures. The artist drew beautiful pictures with vibrant colors, and though simple, they effectively convey both detail and depth. They also incorporate new viewing perspectives as the story progresses: Sometimes the vantage point is across the table from the main character; sometimes it's up in the sky; other times it's below table level. Changing the viewing angle creates extra interest in the artwork — and in the story as a whole.

In addition to the English

version, Spanish and French are also included on this CD-ROM. Kids can use the program to improve reading by studying words as they are spoken, or simply enjoy the sound of the story's rhymes and rhythm. It's a pleasure to explore *Sitting on the Farm*, and any child who likes books on CD-ROM will happily sit with this program for hours.

Odell Down Under: Fishy, But Successful

With *Odell Down Under*, MECC once again drops players in the middle of a foreign environment and challenges them to survive and grow. In the past, the company equipped kids with compasses and camping supplies and put them on the Oregon Trail and in the Amazon Rain Forest. This time, MECC equips kids with fins and gills and transports them to the briny deep.

Odell Down Under turns players into fish. Swimming around, looking for food, they evade bigger fish for whom they would make a succulent snack. I've got to admit it — I wasn't very successful at this game. I've never been good at these explorer games, and my limited experience as a non-mammal left me feeling sort of lost. But *Odell Down Under* did whet my appetite for seafood... I mean, for more information about sea life. After a few rounds of dying from infections, starving, and being eaten by barracudas, I became more methodical, started collecting information carefully, began experimenting, and — of course — kept dying again and again, though always coming back a little wiser (and a little wetter).

The goal of the game is to motivate several different kinds of learning. On the surface, the game stimulates an interest in marine life. The graphics depict a wide variety of colorful and oddly shaped water animals, from bright yellow butterfly fish to ugly gray flashlight fish. Though I never graduated to any of the larger creatures on offer, there are also mureel eels, cuttle fish, and sea wasps.

Heidi E. H. Aycock



ation to music too.

While the various approaches allow readers to thoroughly explore the text in fun and motivating ways, these same features are found in many multimedia titles (though I can't think of another that offers all these options together). When compared to other interactive books, in fact, *Sitting on the Farm* doesn't have very much animation — no giggling flowers or dancing creatures when readers click on certain objects.

Some might bemoan the absence of these extras, but I don't. What makes *Sitting on the Farm* so wonderful are the story and the illustrations. The story is the classic escalation theme like "There was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Fly." In *Sitting on the Farm*, the little girl calls up a frog to chase a bug, then a rat to chase the frog, then a cat to chase the rat, and so forth. Kids natural-

Sometimes looking at a familiar topic from a new perspective can make something standard seem very special indeed — and Heidi's found three gems which prove that point.



One mode of *Sitting on the Farm* lets you set the story to music, with kids selecting which instruments and voices play, and, of course, singing along.

At a deeper level, the game fosters problem-solving skills. Players must try several strategies to survive *Odell Down Under*, all of which involve collecting data, analyzing it, and trying to find a new solution. The threat of becoming some other fish's main course adds an exciting sense of urgency to the process, and as anyone who's taken an admissions test can tell you, problem-solving under pressure is a valuable skill.

And *Odell Down Under* encourages an interest in different perspectives. Sure, there's the unusual perspective of being a fish. But there's also the perspective of living at different points in the food chain. What's it like to be the fish everyone's hoping to fry? What's it like living on tiny, nearly invisible plankton while other fish are living on you? From our human viewpoint, everything in the game can initially look like it's destined for our kitchens, but spending some time as a black and white Spinecheek gives kids some idea of what it's like on the other end of the fork.

Odell Down Under's scope was a little narrow for my hyperactive style. I wanted to explore further; I wanted more information; and I wanted hints on how to survive. But I liked the lessons it taught, and particularly liked its presentation. For kids between the ages 8 and 14 who have a natural interest in marine biology or the challenge of survival in an alien

environment, *Odell Down Under* may well turn out to be a very good choice indeed.

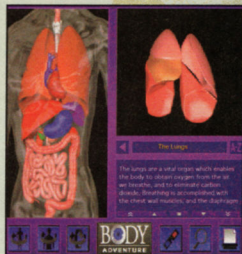
3-D Body Adventure: More Than a Flashy Idea

Much broader in its scope than either *Sitting on the Farm* or *Odell Down Under*, *3-D Body Adventure* presents a new approach to the study of the human species. Knowledge Adventure has proven to be a prolific company, and most of its releases are fun and enlightening at the same time. I'm a big fan of KA, but was much more impressed with *3-D Body Adventure* than anything else of theirs I've seen. The information seemed to go on forever, the interface made it simple

to explore, and the presentation made it interesting. I didn't like the 3-D aspect much, but I don't think it's vital to the quality of the package.

Like earlier Knowledge Adventure products, *3-D Body Adventure* includes some games to help you absorb some of the information. *Body Recall* is a concentration-style game teaching the names of certain bones and organs. The presentation here is beautiful, but there are only 12 squares in each round — hardly a challenge to older kids and adults — and there are only three levels. That seems a bit skimpy for a CD-ROM release. Surely there's room for either bigger boards or more levels.

Another game, *Emergency*, requires players to cure sick patients — but aspiring doctors don't use stethoscopes, lab data, or miracle drugs. Instead they're dropped into a virtual reality in which the human body is represented as a maze; to win the game, players navigate the maze and



3-D Body Adventure has the best video clips Knowledge Adventure has ever offered us, plus truly fascinating subject matter.

video clips; usually they're too grainy, too short, too slow, and so on. This time however, they're sharp and clear. Of particular merit are the fly-bys which take you on a tour of different organs, bones, and systems of the body. Perhaps the most dramatic clip is the breathtaking descent along the spinal cord.

This new angle on the body may motivate some people to explore biology, medicine, and other fields they

might otherwise have ignored. After flying past the thoracic spine, I spent an hour looking up some other related topics in the main part of the program. What an amazing trip!

A Different Perspective

The single feature that makes all of these programs work is their use of unorthodox perspectives. *Sitting on the Farm* takes the standard "interactive book" formula, and spices it up with unusual visual perspectives, and by allowing kids to explore the story in different ways. *Odell Down Under* offers unusual scientific and philosophical perspectives, putting children in the scaly skins of the fish they're studying. And *3-D Body Adventure* takes users on a fantastic voyage through their own bodies.

The subject matter of these titles couldn't be more diverse, but they all teach about interesting topics, about reasoning and creativity and thinking, and make valuable educational tools.

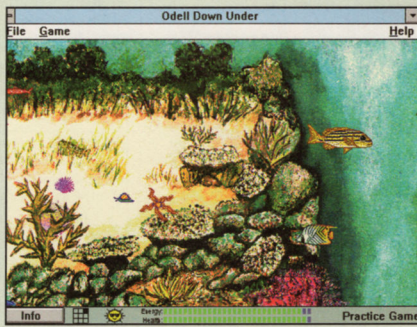
PCG

"These three games share the use of unusual perspectives — and to a large degree that's what makes each successful."

attack the viruses and other pathogens causing the illness.

In the end, the inclusion of these games neither helps nor hurts the overall package — but that's alright, because they aren't the real focus of *3-D Body Adventure*.

The exploratory core of *3-D Body Adventure* is excellent, linking all sorts of information into an understandable whole. But the real stars of the game are the movies. This is the first time I've been really impressed by Knowledge Adventure's



Attractive undersea graphics, added to a real feeling of urgency, make the world of *Odell Down Under* one that's very easy to lose yourself in.

*Finally. A Sound Card
from a company that knows sound!*

SOUNDSCAPE



Soundscape™ by ENSONIQ. The first wavetable sound board that gives you professional 16-bit sound and compatibility with today's hottest game titles and multimedia applications – at a price you can afford.

ENSONIQ is a leading manufacturer of high-quality synthesizers used by top recording artists. Now, the same wavetable technology that drives our \$3,000 keyboards is available for your PC.

Award-winning sounds. Our commitment to sound is unequalled. With Soundscape, you'll hear sounds created by Grammy Award-winning musicians, renowned orchestral players, and top studio engineers.

Maximum compatibility. Great sound doesn't matter if your board won't work with your software, so we've made Soundscape compatible with virtually all PC standards. Whether you're in the game room, the classroom, or the boardroom, Soundscape will provide unrivaled sound quality for all your applications.

Make the right choice.

Call 1-800-942-0096 for more information. Soundscape is now available at all Electronics Boutique and Waldensoftware locations.



For \$279 (suggested retail) you get:

Genuine ENSONIQ wavetable synthesis

16-bit sound with 32 voice polyphony

Supports the broadest range of games and multimedia standards, including:

SoundBlaster™, AdLib™, MPU-401,
MT-32, General MIDI, MPC Level 1 & 2,
Windows™ 3.1, Windows Sound System™

No host CPU overhead; no TSRs

3 CD-ROM connectors for maximum flexibility

60-day no-nonsense refund, plus a three year limited hardware warranty

ENSONIQ™

LEADING THE WORLD IN SOUND INNOVATION

* With the exception of the few titles that use ADPCM.
All trademarks property of their respective owners.
© 1994 ENSONIQ Corp. 155 Great Valley Parkway, Malvern PA 19355-0735

Product Information Number 232



A Superfluity of Simulations, a Plethora of Products and Patches

Once in a while I find myself smiling and thinking life on this earth might actually be more than just an exercise in futility. Things aren't that bad, I muse. Life can actually be pretty cool. Then my personal demon returns from his vacation and sets the wheels of misery in motion again. But I won't bore you with my tragedies.

New Simulations

Billed as an Interactive Earthquake Simulation, *The Big One* by **Swift** uses information obtained from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the California Office of Emergency Services, and dozens of other sources so that you can accurately generate an earthquake along any California faultline, then sit back and watch as all sorts of wackiness ensues.

You're supposed to help out by mobilizing Police, Fire and other public services in order to save lives and repair damage, but it's much more fun to relax and watch as the toxic flames go about their happy task and the death toll skyrockets past the national debt. Kind of like *SimCity* without the dull bits.

Wing Commander

Armada by **Origin** is reviewed elsewhere in this issue, but I wanted to personally tell you just how awesome it looks. Not only do you get to (finally) fly head-to-head against another human being, but you do so in a smoothed and improved WC universe that makes the first two games look as primitive as the original Star Trek TV show. The detailed starships will take your breath away.

New Products

The ProStick from *Atlantis Software* is a simple, non-invasive \$10 TSR program that allows you to reprogram the

buttons on any joystick (including the FlightStick Pro and FCS hat switches) without having to spring for a ThrustMaster Mark II Weapons Control System.

ProStick uses about 7K of memory, and will not work with games that use direct keyboard I/O (forget about Origin and Dynamix stuff). It works beautifully with keyboard-buffering titles like LucasArts' flight sims (including *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*), and US-made MicroProse games. Call (510) 796-2180 for more info.

ThrustMaster has some good news for racing fans — the Formula T1 Driving Consists by ThrustMaster. Consisting of a steering wheel,

control stick. In the event that 14 lbs. is a bit too stiff (or too light) for you, ThrustMaster offers a kit which contains both light (10 lbs.) and heavy (20 lbs.) tension springs.

Unlike the previous PFCS, this new model does spring back to dead center. But it's still the ideal solution for those who tend to over-control.

Sim Patches

Has all the talk about patches for Ocean's *TFX* got you confused? Well, if you've got the U.S. release, you needn't worry. The six patches (three each for the floppy and CD-ROM versions) are for the European releases only, and bring the version number up to



Burn, baby, burn! As toxic clouds and fires surround Beverly Hills, 90210, the newsdude reads calmly on...

2.01 — the equivalent of the U.S. release.

The patches correct over 20 different problems including program crashes, weapons performance, sound irregularities, and joystick calibration. Once installed, these patches make *TFX* (especially on CD-ROM) much more enjoyable.

You can download the patches from CompuServe or America Online, or you can contact Ocean U.K. at 011 44 061 832 6633 (don't forget the time difference — five hours ahead of the east coast).

In other upgrade news, **MicroProse** has updated *Fleet Defender*. The seemingly perfect computer naval aviation experience had its minor bugs, but it's all better now. Update Version 1.2 corrects the dreaded heading drift and padlock jitters, discrepancies between briefings and actual mission objectives, and generally tweaks the entire simulation engine from graphic nuances to seemingly trivial details. No word yet on A-A refueling, which may or may not be in the Miramar scenario disks.

This update is available on most of the on-line services, as well as MicroProse's own BBS at (410) 785-1841.

And finally...

In a non-simulation vein, I'd like to make a personal appeal to **Merit Software**, who are under enormous pressure to tone down the graphic violence in the upcoming game *Harvester*. Don't do it! Be true to your vision, and don't disappoint those of us who appreciate originality. For the scared, there's always *Lemmings*. **PCG**

Scott Wolf



shifter, and foot pedals, the T1 is an *IndyCar* lover's dream come true. The problem with the T1 was that it only worked with games that use two joysticks — namely *IndyCar Racing* and *World Circuit*. Fans of single-joystick classics like *Stunts*, *Car & Driver*, and *Grand Prix Unlimited* were out of luck with the T1.

But not any more! After fiddling around with TSRs, ThrustMaster finally settled on an adapter plug that tells your gamecard it's reading a single joystick. Now the gas and brake pedals function as forward and back on Joystick 1, so you can use the T1 with nearly any racing sim. Playing *MegaRace* with the T1 and a *ThunderSeat* is delicious.

ThrustMaster has also updated their superb Pro FCS. It now comes with springs which offer 14 pounds of resistance, to more closely simulate the feel of an actual aircraft

Taking in everything from *Wing Commander Academy* to *The Big One*, from new ThrustMaster joysticks to *TFX* patches, Scott Wolf reports from the world of simulations...

FREE GAME!

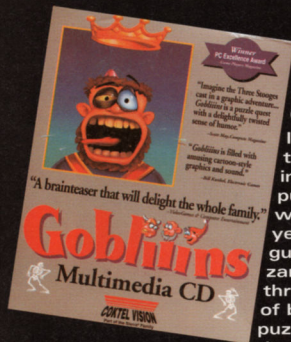
To celebrate the launch of PC GAMER, we've teamed up with Sierra On-line to bring you a sensational charter subscription offer on PC GAMER.



Gabriel Knight: The Sins of the Fathers

In the first installment of what promises to be a long, successful new series, Gabriel Knight enters the

world of the New Orleans voodoo cults — and discovers the truth about his own amazing destiny.



Goblins

It's one of the most innovative puzzle games we've seen in years! You'll guide three zany goblins through a land of brain-teasing puzzles and odd situations. Each

has his own special abilities, and it's up to you to figure out how to use them.

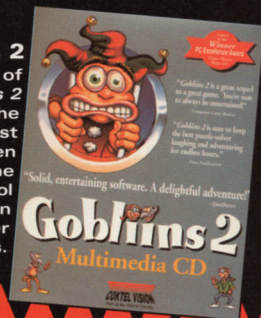
PC Gamer

— THE authoritative guide to PC gaming.

Whether you've been playing PC games for years or are just getting started, *PC Gamer* is the magazine you've been looking for. Every month we'll bring you honest, hard-hitting reviews of all the latest games — including the new, cutting-edge CD-ROM titles — so that you'll know which ones are right for you. Our editors are PC gaming experts, and they'll give you the information you need before you buy.

Goblins 2

The best kind of sequel, *Goblins 2* brings you all the fun of the first game — and then some. This time out, you'll control two little imps in even tougher puzzles.

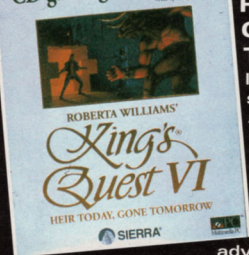


...when you
subscribe to

PC GAMER

Act now, and you can take your choice of any one of these six great Sierra games — on either floppy disk or CD-ROM — absolutely FREE!

"Proof that the era of CD gaming is upon us."



King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

It's love at first sight for Prince Alexander, and he's become determined to track down his princess and win her heart. Romance,

adventure, action — it's all here in the most beautiful KQ yet!

The PC Gamer Cover Disk

With every issue, you'll get the PC Gamer Cover Disk. It's an interactive demo disk that lets you try out the hottest new titles around — before you buy them. Only PC Gamer gives you the chance to test drive some of the biggest, most eagerly awaited new games on the market — every month.

You Get it All!

Put it all together, and this is a deal you just can't pass up! You get:
-12 issues of the best PC games magazine in the business
-12 cover disks packed with interactive demos
-AND your choice of any one of six great Sierra games
All this, for only \$47.95 a year — a savings of almost 50% off the newsstand price!

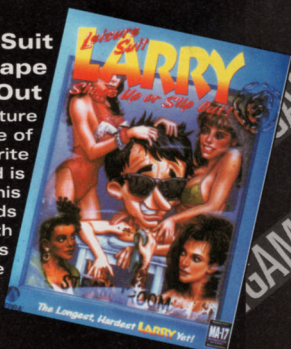
King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder

Magic! Gypsies! Ants! Yetis! KQV has them all, as good King Graham, patriarch of a whole family of adventurers, goes up against the evil Mordack in his second King's Quest game. Great graphics, great sound, great game!



Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up or Slip Out

This latest adventure in the life of America's favorite lounge lizard is vintage Larry. This time out, Larry finds himself in a health spa full of gorgeous women — and one of them might be Ms. Right!



save
50%

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

If you're not satisfied with PC Gamer, you may cancel your subscription at any time. We'll give you a full refund for all unmailed copies.

Where Do I Sign?

So if you're as serious as we are about PC gaming, subscribe today! Don't miss a single cover disk — or the reviews, previews, and insight only PC Gamer can provide. Just fill out the card and get ready for a year of the best PC magazine there is — delivered right to your door, every month!

For even faster service, call our subscription hotline at (201) 703-9505.

What's the Deal with DOS Extenders?

Game programmers always chase the limits of PC performance. With so much competition between publishers, every game has to look as good and run as quickly as possible, making full use of each processing cycle of CPU power and every last byte of memory.

Now that about every PC gamer's system includes at least a 386 processor, developers are writing games that use the full 32-bit power of 386, 486 and Pentium CPUs. These programs often come with a piece of software called a DOS extender, a package that loads along with the game to provide the interface between the game's 32-bit program code and the 16-bit code of DOS and the PC's BIOS. Some of the fastest, most spectacular PC games are 32-bit programs using DOS extenders. But it's a new technology, and we haven't learned everything about it yet. So along with the benefits comes the potential for trouble.

Some readers experienced this trouble first hand when they tried to run the *Theme Park* demo disk included with the first issue of *PC Gamer*. The demo's DOS extender, a not-quite-up-to-date version of Rational Systems' DOS/4GW, conflicted with EMM386.EXE, MS-DOS's memory manager. On 4 megabyte systems, the demo couldn't find enough memory to run if EMM386 was loaded. The fix was to restart DOS without a memory manager, either by using a boot disk with simple CONFIG.SYS file or, under DOS 6, to press F8 when the system booted and so manually prevent EMM386.EXE from loading.

It was a mess, and caused a lot of aggravation for the staff as well as the readers. But to understand why DOS extenders are so valuable (and why programmers are working so hard to sort out this technology), it

helps to know something about what it's like to program without an extender.

What's Wrong With 16 Bits

To put it plainly, 16-bit DOS programming is a pain. To start with, you only have access to 1 megabyte of memory at a time — DOS's notorious 1 MB barrier. To get at the rest of the RAM, you need the services of a memory manager to use either expanded (EMS) or extended (XMS) memory.

CPU memory segments make it even worse. That small 1MB DOS address space is actually chopped up into even tinier 64K memory segments, and the data in an operation

may have another reason for being interested. Although memory segments are still there, a protected mode segment can be as large as 4 gigabytes — that's 4,192 megabytes, folks — so they aren't as likely to cramp a programmer's style. And with a 4GB memory segment, the 1MB addressing barrier is also gone. In protected mode, every byte of RAM in the system is immediately available to the program.

The Cost of Protection

So 32-bit protected mode makes life a whole lot easier for game programmers, and it also lets games run faster and look better. Sounds great, but isn't

there a catch? You bet there is. The MS-DOS operating system is also a program, and it's written for 16-bit unprotected mode, also called "real mode." Real-mode code is written very differently from protected mode code, and code only runs correctly in the right CPU mode. Protected mode programs have to shift the system back into real mode to call DOS every time they access a disk, check the mouse, or do any other system operation.

That's where DOS extenders come in. In effect, a DOS extender is a small operating system that translates all of the program's requests for services into DOS calls. It handles the process of switching between CPU modes and takes care of the memory management part of protected mode. That's a tricky job, and dealing with DOS memory managers is one of the trickiest parts.

A protected mode program doesn't need a memory manager to access memory past the 1 megabyte limit, since it has direct access to every byte of RAM in the system. But if a memory manager is running, the extender has to know how to deal with it. Most of the system's memory is available when a game starts running, but the program can't just grab every bit of RAM and go. Device drivers, utility programs, and DOS also reside in memory, and changing even one of their bytes could crash the system or cause some mysterious malfunction. A DOS extender has to cooperate with a memory manager to find out which regions of memory are in use, and that's where many of the current problems come from: not being able to run with a particular memory manager, or not getting access to all a system's memory from it.

The situation is improving. But when you've just bought a game that won't run because its extender doesn't like something about your system, that's small consolation. Like Super VGA drivers and memory managers before them, it won't be long before all the conflicts are resolved. But in the meantime, keep that boot floppy handy.

Tim Victor



can never cross a 64K segment boundary. If it does, you'll have to split the operation to work with smaller pieces. Programmers can spend as much time worrying about segments as they do the logic of a game. Worse yet, the program might have to execute boundary checks each time it runs, and that slows the game, since CPU cycles spent wrestling with memory segments can't be used for 3D rendering or the other cool computations that make games so impressive.

What makes 32-bit programming so much better is 32-bit protected mode, introduced with 386 CPUs. The mode's name comes from a feature that lets operating systems set areas of memory off-limits to certain applications. Designers of advanced operating systems value this part of protected mode, since it makes their systems more stable and reliable. But game program-

If you had trouble with our *Theme Park* demo, you'll know all about DOS extenders by now. But why are they so valuable — yet so potentially problematic? Tim Victor explains all...

SO MANY TARGETS, SO LITTLE TIME!

RAPTOR

CALL OF THE SHADOWS



Ultra-detailed, smooth scrolling VGA graphics



Explosive cinematics and sound tracks



Supports all major sound cards and game controllers



27 enormous levels, each with at least one boss ship



Discover many undocumented enemies

CYGNUS
STUDIOS

APOGEE™

SOFTWARE

P.O. BOX 496389
GARLAND, TX 75049

"Raptor is the best shareware title since DOOM!"

-- Computer Gaming World, June '94

The Raptor, a super-tech bird of prey with enough state-of-the-art firepower to crush any foolhardy opposition. As if twin machine guns that can rip holes through 6-inch steel plates weren't enough, the Raptor can be upgraded with 14 hard-core weapons that go beyond intense, straight to overkill! Your mission: Kill for cash, and leave nothing standing in your wake!

"If you thought your PC could never play a scrolling shooter, think again...you're bound to lose your cookies over *Raptor*. It has some of the hottest graphics ever seen...and the sound will astound you. It's a superstar!" -- Interactive Entertainment, May '94

Order *Raptor* today! Normally \$34.95, save \$5 if you mention **PC GAMER**.

CALL 1-800-GAME-123 24 HOUR ORDER LINE

Or, download the shareware episode from Software Creations, Apogee's home BBS (where you can get ALL of Apogee's shareware games free of charge). Just call the numbers below and check out Apogee's file section, #1 of course!

(508) 365-2359
2400 BAUD

(508) 368-7036
9600-14.4K

(508) 368-2032
14.4-16.8K

"Raptor's voracious gameplay eats other shooters for lunch!"

Chuck Miller -- CGW, June '94

Raptor: Call of the Shadows requires an IBM™ or 100% compatible 386 or better computer with 2 MEG RAM (4 MEG recommended), a VGA graphics card and 12 MEG free space on a hard disk drive. Joystick and mouse are optional. Supports all major sound cards.

All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

A002PCG

Well, it looks like a lot of you

were pretty hungry for someone to answer your gaming questions — we've received a ton of letters on the subject, not to mention a whole load of your tips too. Indeed, if the volume of mail we're getting is any indication, *Strategy Central* may have to expand soon to give you more of what you want.

That being the case, this month we're running nothing but your tips and questions (and answers to those questions, of course). Remember, keep 'em coming. Hey — you could win free games!

**Write to us at:
Strategy Central
PC Gamer,
300-A S. Westgate Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27407
E-Mail — peceeegee@aol.com**

Be sure to include address and a daytime phone number with your strategy letter. Sorry, we can't answer each letter personally, but we read all of 'em.

Myst: Dazed and confused....

Obviously still one of the hottest games around, *Myst* dazed a lot (as in a whole lot) of you to write to us in the hope of getting some answers. There's only so much room here, and we can't show you everything, so we've picked the two areas that seem to be causing the most confusion....

Dear PC Gamer,

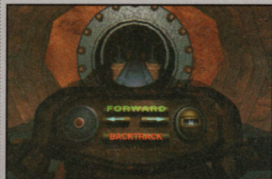
Though I've been playing Myst for about two weeks now, I think I'm about to throw in the towel! I figured out how to get the lock open in the scientific age, but I keep getting lost in all those stupid caverns underneath the door. Where can I find myself a clue that shows me how I can get through?

Janice Maadford
Albany, New York

Don't give up quite yet — you already have the clue you need to get through the maze! Each time you move the maze runner, you'll hear a different tone. Each tone corresponds to one of the four compass directions. A small bell means North, a chirp means West, a hiss means East, and a muffled bell means South. A combination of tones indicates one of the four secondary directions (a bell and a chirp at the same time means Northwest). Just listen, and following these tonal directions each time you move. You'll end up in a chamber with a chair and a book that will take you back to the main library. If you ever miss a sound, press the red button on the left side of your console to repeat it. And if you're still having trouble, the complete path directions are listed to the right. Good luck!



With the sliders set in the positions shown here, the button on this Scientific age door will allow entry into the maze.



If you can't get the hang of all the different tones — and it takes some time — here's the complete path from the first junction. N, W, N, E, E, S, S, W, SW, W, NW, NE, N, and then SE. Now get out there and walk into the book chamber.



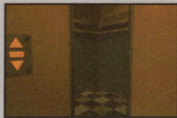
The maze runner is a pretty amazing looking craft, but its navigational controls leave a lot to be desired.



Don't peek unless you're really stuck! These are the settings used to open the hidden staircase and escape the mechanical age.



This is the staircase leading to the elevator controls. Until you solve the first puzzle, you won't even be able to get into it.



There're three buttons here. Go up, then press the middle button and bail out.



Here's what the puzzle downstairs should look like when finished. Now you're ready to get onboard that elevator.



These controls can be a real pain to use effectively if you haven't practiced up on the simulation in Achenar's room. You'd be well advised to go back there and study up.

Dear PC Gamer,

Myst is the best game I've ever played. My brother and I have been stuck in the same place for a long time, though. In the mechanical age, there's an elevator behind the two bedrooms. When I rode the elevator up there was nothing there, and it won't go down any further. Please help us out!

Todd Matthews
Mobile, Alabama

Since some of you were having trouble getting the elevator moving to begin with, we'll start at the beginning. To get the elevator open, you'll first need to open the hidden staircase by pushing the button outside the entrance to the elevator room. Go down the stairs, and fiddle with the two levers until the holes in the display line up. Go back upstairs, close the hidden staircase, and proceed into the elevator room. From the elevator there are only two rooms you can reach — the one you started in, and the empty top floor. Pressing the square button in the middle of the elevator control panel will move the elevator between the two floors. Take the elevator to the top floor, press the middle button, and then quickly step off before the elevator goes to its median location. When it goes down, you'll see a set of controls that were on top of the elevator itself. These controls will rotate the islands so that you can gain access to new areas. If you can't get the hang of the controls, practice on the holographic simulator that's in Achenar's room. For those of you still stuck in this age, we've included the code for the hidden stairs at the beginning of the level underneath one of the pictures on the page opposite. Have fun.

Goblins 3: How to Keep the game from dragging...

Dear PC Gamer,

I just got Goblins Quest 3, and I'm stuck in the country with the tiny castle and the dragon. I can get the parrot up, but not Blount. I can't beat the knight, either. Please help!

Ian Grossberg
Livingstone, NJ

The country scene in *Goblins 3* is Blount's first shot at the life of a giant. While being big does have its disadvantages (everyone's scared of you!), your size will be important in getting you through this landscape. The first thing you'll want to do is to pick up the dolmen and stone from the left side of the castle. Next, grab the haystack that's sitting next to the burning building. Take the haystack and use it on the water basin to create a wet sponge. Use



After dipping the haystack in the water basin, you've got a homemade sponge that's perfect for putting out those little house fires.

the sponge on the fire to put it out, and take the fork. Now it's time to get into that castle! Take the fork and lift the meat out of the dragon trap. Place Chump on the lever of the trap, and have Blount use the stone hand to set off the trap. When you bring Chump back to the ground, the trap will re-activate and send Blount flying into the castle. The princess is the only one not afraid of you, so pick up the lid to her room and talk to

continued on p. 103



Here's the lovely countryside. Looks like that amnesiac dragon has taken out his anger on those poor buildings. You need to get him to remember that he's a good dragon, and soon!

NR 13

WARNING!
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR
PLAYERS UNDER 13

MEGA TECH

System requirements:
IBM PC/95/96/98 compatible
(88% recommended), VGA
graphics, no extended memory
required, Sound Blaster™ and
Pro Audio Spectrum™
compatible. CD-ROM or
diskette version available.



For centuries, war has raged among the demons and fairies, devastating this mystical land. Two young knights, separated at birth and raised by mortals, chosen for the ultimate battle that will decide the fate of heaven and earth. Never knowing their true relation — or their own dark destiny they are fated to meet and duel each other to the death. As Desmond, the Knight of Xentar, you will be striving with many a winsome enchantress to overcome menacing foes — and perhaps in victory, become the ruler of all.

So the challenge is on! An incomparable role playing fantasy game for your PC, with stunning, hand sculpted graphics throughout, humorous script and thrilling plots. But be warned — with its romance and intense action, Knights of Xentar is not for kids nor the faint hearted.

Available at finer software dealers everywhere or call
1 800 258 MEGA. Visa/Mastercard accepted.

Download the FREE demo by calling our 24 hour BBS 310 539 7739
(8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit, filename kxdemo.exe)
or send \$5 for the demo on diskette to
Megatech, PO Box 11333, Torrance, CA 90510.

ENTER THE WORLD OF DEMONS ECSTASY OR EXTINCTION AWAITS

Based on the

Japanese hit

*The Role Playing
movie and*

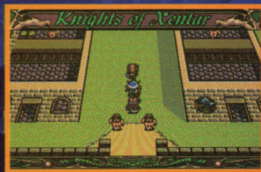
#1 game,

Dragon

Knight III

Game that will thrill you with the best in Japanese Anime Art

Product Information Number 183



KNIGHTS of XENTAR

her. After you've talked to her, the knight will help you. To get to him, place the dolmen that you picked up earlier on the patch of thorns that are blocking the way. Though he's still too scared to help out himself, the knight will set you up with a helpful memorum potion that will bring the dragon back to his senses. All you have to do now is pour the potion into the water basin, and get the dragon to drink.

Just in case, we've gone ahead and included a solution to the next puzzle, too. Don't look 'til you've given it an honest try...

Now that you've spiked the water basin, you need to make the dragon thirsty. The answer is in the town's inn. The first thing you'll want to do here is to grab the spoon that's sitting on the ground. Put the spoon on the stone that lies next to the exit, and go through the hole in the wall that's next to Korin's sword. Take a sugar cube from the plate. To get back down off the table, click on the coffee mug. Maneuver Chump onto the spoon, and have Blount use the sugar cube to catapult Chump up onto the shelf. Walk Blount onto the Captain's arm. If you have Chump use the paprika, he will start to sneeze. All you need to do now is place the meat into the cloud of paprika, and you have yourself a dragon treat that's guaranteed to drive him to drink....



Chat with the princess to figure out what's going on. After you've chatted with her, the knight will be glad to help you.



After you've plugged up the holes in the skull, and gotten the dragon to eat, he'll poke his little head out for a drink. When his memory comes back, you've got a new pal!



The folks in the inn may look quiet, but they're a pretty fun bunch. Make that spoon and rock into a catapult and have Chump soar to new heights.

Master of Orion

We've always got some room for more *Master of Orion* strategy...

Dear PC Gamer,

I've been playing *Master of Orion* for several months now, and I've got a few tips for your readers. Here are a couple of key combinations that will help you out if you're having trouble with the game. By holding down the Alt key and hitting P, you'll scramble the personalities of the alien leaders. This way, you won't know what to expect from your enemies! To get 100 BC's added to your reserve funds, hold down the Alt key, and this time type MOOLA. You'll hear a click, and there's your cash! I've used both of these codes a bunch of times, and there don't seem to be any negative consequences.

Chuck Schmid,
Tucson, AZ

PLANET	POPULATION	SCIENCE	ARMY	NAVY	SPY	SPICE	POWER	DEFENSE
1	1000	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2	2000	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
3	3000	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
4	4000	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
5	5000	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
6	6000	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
7	7000	700	700	700	700	700	700	700
8	8000	800	800	800	800	800	800	800
9	9000	900	900	900	900	900	900	900
10	10000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Who knows what evil lies hidden beneath the scrambled personality of the usually fairly peaceful Alkari?



By using that MOOLA code, you can send your planetary reserves soaring.

Quest For Glory 1

In addition to some general info on the game, we received an unusual tip for those of you who have been strapped for cash...

Dear PC Gamer,

Here's a trick for Quest for Glory 1 (the VGA remake only) that allows you to get as much money as you want. First off, go to the mushroom patch. Then position the hand icon over the mushrooms, and set a paper weight on your enter key (or keep clicking the right mouse button) until you feel you have enough mushrooms. Then go back to the healer's hut and give them to her. After the first few, she'll say, "I'm sorry, but I have enough mushrooms." Fortunately for us gamers, Sierra forgot to put in a line that makes sure she doesn't pay you for them anymore. So you can just keep giving her mushrooms, and she'll keep giving you money. You can use this trick as many times as you want.

Paul Pollack
New Port Richey, FL



Here are those mushrooms. Grab up a mighty handful o' the things, and then head back toward the old lady's house.



Don't you believe her! After all, she's got an unlimited supply of cash, and apparently just can't keep herself from buyin' some more of those tasty mushrooms.

Ultima VII: Weathering the elements...

After sorting through the mailbag, we found a lot of you had questions about Origin's *Pagan: Ultima VII*. As we learned the first time through, the mere size of the game can be pretty intimidating at times, and it's very easy to get lost. Here are some basic clues to help get you through your first trial, the quest for the heart of stone.

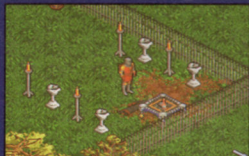
Dear PC Gamer,

I've found the Necromancer, but he says that he can't begin his ceremony without a certain dagger. I've looked everywhere, both in the cemetery and the city, and I still can't find it. Is this just a red herring that's supposed to get me in trouble with the queen, or is there really a dagger hidden in some obscure location?

Jeff Talhaw
Reno, Nevada



Only after the trial of the Necromancers can you become Scion.



Perform the Ritual of Internment on the old Necromancer's body before continuing.

Jeff, it looks like you've missed a location — the queen's bedroom. To get inside her room, you first need to talk to Aramina while she's at home. Aramina won't want to help you, so you'll have to convince her that she won't get in trouble. She'll then give you the key to a chamber within the queen's bedroom. Now head back to the room in front of the bed chamber. Look under the cushion that rests on a table to the left of the doors. Take the key you find, and use it to unlock the bedroom doors. It's really best to wait until the queen is eating to steal the dagger, but if you're impatient, just remember not to ever step on the rug, and she won't wake up. Use Aramina's key to open the closet door, and then use it again to open the chest. Take the dagger, and carefully get back out of the room. Now give the dagger to the Necromancer, and watch the fun!

Dear PC Gamer,

In Ultima VIII, I can't find the Heart of Earth. I've been through all of the Necromancer's trials, talked to the Mountain King, and was told to go to the Pit of Despair. The problem is, I can't find the Pit of Despair! It doesn't seem to be in the catacombs, or in the caves underneath the catacombs. Can you guys give me a hand on this one?

Matt Hawthorne
Richmond, VA

The road to the Heart of Earth is located off of the main cavern called Stone Cove. Use the Key of the Scion to open the small door with the walls and spikes, located on the north wall all the way to the west side. Once inside, immediately travel west, and then south, and you should see a really big, broken-down wall. Go to the doors at the south end of this structure, and create a golem to open them for you. Climb up onto the edge of the center area, and cast the Open Earth spell (I hope you brought some reagents) on the ground in front of the tombstone. The ground will be torn open, and the Heart of Earth will be right there. Now it's time to head to the Zelans!



Here's the door that'll lead you to the Heart of Earth. Careful — there's a lot of undead about!



After reaching the grave, cast an Open Ground spell to uncover the Heart of Earth.

Mortal Kombat

After our strategy piece on *Mortal Kombat* last month, we received several letters with some more hints and tips for the game. Here's one that details a particularly nifty little hidden debug mode.

Dear PC Gamer,

I have a very good trick for *Mortal Kombat* on the PC. When you start up the game, go to the option menu by pressing F10. While on this screen, press and hold down shift, then press type D, I, P. A screen should come up that shows nine different switch options. The switches have the following effects:

- Switch 0 (on) = Enable fatalities
- Switch 1 (on) = Enable blood
- Switch 2 (on) = Sound on during the title sequence
- Switch 3 (off) = Sound effects on
- Switch 4 (on) = Computer does fatality every time
- Switch 5 (on) = Free play
- Switch 6, 7, 8 = Still haven't figured them out....

Ben Strecker
Lincolnshire IL



Here's a picture of the debug screen. Here at PC Gamer, we recommend switches 0 and 1 remain on at all times...



In free play mode you don't have to worry 'bout keeping those credits anymore.

HARVESTER™

A hooded figure in a dark, textured robe holds a large scythe vertically. The scythe's blade is positioned horizontally across the middle of the frame, with a bright light source behind it, creating a lens flare effect. The background is a dark, cloudy night sky. In the lower-left background, a neon sign for 'EDNA'S DINER' is visible, with a smaller sign below it that says 'Open 24 Hours'. To the right, there are silhouettes of buildings with lit-up spires, suggesting a cityscape at night.

coming fall '94

for PC CD ROM



Merit Software™

DALLAS, TX 1-800-238-4277

**FUTURE
VISION™**

PC GAMER LETTERS

T

his month, the comments on issue 1 of the new *PC*

Gamer really started to flood in — which is why we've dedicated most of this letters section to that very subject. The overwhelming majority of you seem to like the magazine a lot (something we're glad to hear), though a few of you had some interesting ideas for ways we could further improve the book. We'll deal with those as they come up. You'll notice we've included a reader survey form on these pages, too. Please take the time to fill it out and return it to us. You might win your very own *PC Gamer* bowling shirt (20 will be awarded to randomly selected survey respondents), and of course the info we gather will help us further fine-tune *PC Gamer* to make it exactly the sort of magazine that you want to read.

Win \$100 of free software!

We're giving away free games to the writer of the best letter we print each month! So, whatever it is you've got to say on the subject of *PC Gamer* or *PC Gamer*, write to us at:

Letters,

PC Gamer,

300-A S. Westgate Dr.

Greensboro, NC 27407

E-Mail — paecegee@aol.com

(Be sure to include a daytime phone number.)

Numerical Scores — The Case Against...

Dear Sirs,

I've been reading *PC Entertainment* for over a year now, and must admit the new format of *PC Gamer* is an improvement. Among the things I like are the Scoop! articles (apart from the "Why Should I Care?" question in the F.Y.I. box. If I had that kind of attitude towards *PC Gamer*, I wouldn't be reading your magazine). The rest of the information in the F.Y.I. box is (I hate to be redundant) very informative, though.

I also thought the "How They Stack Up" table in the piece on submarine sims was a very good idea. Even though each game simulates a different time period, I would wager that the average sim fan will buy only one, maybe two, submarine sims. This type of information really helps us to choose which ones to pick. I hope you'll do similar comparisons in the future.

I was also glad to see you retained the Extended Play and Gaming News (Eyewitness) departments. I look forward to reading the Sim and Tech Shop columns each month, too. The patch disk list in Extended Play is a must-have for *PC Gamer* magazines. And having played board war games in the past, but never one on a computer, I was wondering which one would make a good entry-level purchase for me. Thanks to The General, I think I'll go for *Patton Strikes Back*.

And then there's the meat and potatoes of the magazine — the reviews. The hardware requirements and recommendations are good, but the final verdict percentages are not! I read a review to find out the facts and your opinion about a game, but I believe the final verdict is determined by whether or not I buy it. Also, if you're going to place a numerical value on your opinion, I hope you determine that value through an established grading system.

Overall, going monthly was a definite plus. My "final verdict" is I'm going to renew my subscription for six months, then go from there.

Sincerely,
Harold Gard
Huntingdon, IN

We feel it's our job to tell you exactly what we think about each game we review in as clear a fashion as possible — so we give you both a thorough review, and a percentage score. Our ratings give you at-a-glance information to help you make buying decisions, but they're really useful only when accompanied by solid, detailed analysis from our expert reviewers. Together,

we think they make our reviews the best around. Give it a chance — we hope the idea will grow on you.

And we do use a predefined rating scale, explained on the first page of the reviews section. We examine each review carefully, and then make sure that the ratings match the reviews and are fair to both the game in question and to you, the consumer. After all, it's your gaming dollars that drive this entire industry.

...And The Case For

Dear *PC Gamer*,

I've just finished tearing through my premier issue of *PC Gamer*, and I loved it. I have to say that the new percentage-based rating system is great. It really simplifies things.

Overall, the new magazine is wonderful, but one thing I would like to see in the future is product information numbers following the reviews of games, and not only in the product ads. If this is only available for companies who pay for a space in your magazine, I understand, but I found myself wanting product information on *Doom*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Bioforge*, *FPS Baseball*, *Rise of the Robots*, as well as many others.

Thanks,
Eric Moreland,
Bedford, PA

Yes, it is linked to ad space. But remember — games that are being advertised tend to be the ones that have information available on them anyway. Something like Rise of the Robots, which you mentioned, is still in development. It's far too early for any literature to have been put together on the product yet, so we're probably your best source for information anyway. Oh, and we're glad you like the ratings!

The Future Of Games

Dear guys,

First of all, I'd like to compliment you on a job well done on *PC Gamer*. I've read it cover-to-cover twice! I do have a suggestion, though. In one of your upcoming issues, I'd like to see a feature on the future of gaming. I'm not just talking about the latest releases — I want to know what games will be like in this time next year, or even two or three years from now. What do the experts at *PC Gamer*, developers, publishers, etc. expect to see in the future? What new developments in technologies have been tested? Are developers going to continue to push the hardware envelope? Will CD-ROM make conventional

disks obsolete? I think these are questions that a lot of gamers have. I understand there are no sure answers to these questions, but it would be nice to see some articles that provided some speculations and insight. Once again, thanks for PC Gamer.

Yours truly,
Matt Zerby,
Mission Viejo, CA

That kind of "what does the future hold?" thing will always be a part of PC Gamer. With features like the Virtual Reality piece this month, or the CD-ROM feature in issue 2, we'll do everything we can to keep you posted on the latest developments in PC gaming. After all, it would be tough to do justice to the entire future of gaming in a single article. However, if the future of computer gaming is your thing, you might be interested in a project we have in the works right now. We can't say much about it at the moment, but we'll print more details as soon as we can.

New Games, Old Games, And That Fancy Pentium

Dear PC Gamer,

I was hoping you could shed some light on what impact the recent Pentium systems mean to the PC gaming world; specifically, will existing software (ie. Falcon 3.0, X-Wing, ATP, Strike Commander, 7th Guest, etc.) run on these systems, or must software manufacturers provide drivers for the older games to support a Pentium CPU? Currently a game like X-Wing runs pretty well on my 486 machine; is it possible it could run too fast (and therefore be unplayable) on a new Pentium 90 machine?

The reason for my interest in a Pentium machine results from experience with *Flight Simulator 5.0* and its scenery add-ons; the existing frame rate on my 486 system is really too slow to be enjoyable at anything but sparse scenery detail levels, and I'll bet a Pentium would help!

Yours,
L. Slosar,
San Francisco, CA

You ask a very good question — and unfortunately, there's no easy answer. So many factors affect game performance — the video card you're using, the amount of memory you have and how it's used, your hard drive's access time and whether or not you're using a disk cache — that it can be tough to tell how a game will perform on any given system. In general, though, the more powerful processor and faster clock speed of the Pentium will make your games run faster. How much faster, and whether it'll be too

fast, will largely be a case-by-case matter. By all means, though, go for the Pentium. You might be surprised to find that some of your favorite games are even better, and some of those that seemed clunky before will become new favorites. And in cases where a game's performance is adversely affected by the Pentium, we're already seeing game companies offering patches to correct the problems. Just keep an eye on our Extended Play column.

As for drivers and Pentium compatibility, there'll be no problem. The Pentium is compatible with all of Intel's other chips, so software designed for, say, a 386 will still work just fine.

Letter of the Month! Can Copy Protection Ruin A Good Game?

Dear PC Gamer,

I applaud your writers for giving us the facts, rather than the hype. Your readers need to know both the good and bad qualities of a particular product in order to make an informed purchasing decision. The new layouts are well designed, attractive, and easy to read. And the articles are, most importantly, current! I don't need reviews of games I finished playing six months ago.

One thing I'd suggest is you include a description of the copy protection system used. I typically refuse to buy software with copy protection, no matter how great the game may be. Having to dig out a manual, code wheel or other such nonsense is asking a lot of the consumer. I have boycotted MicroProse and Accolade products for years now due to their obsession with these intrusive forms of copy protection. Being a software developer myself, I understand the need to prevent software piracy, but I feel a more effective way to do this is through consumer education or product design, rather than degradation of the software. There are many companies who've opted for this approach (Origin, Dynamix, Sierra, Spectrum Holobyte) who produce excellent products. I will support them with my software purchases, but refuse to buy from companies who continue to use copy protection.

Tony L. Morris,
Arlington TX

We agree that some copy protection schemes can be incredibly annoying, and we'll let you know when we think they're unreasonable. But it's hard to condemn copy protection on the whole. As you clearly understand, these people are just trying to protect their livelihoods. As to

PC GAMER

Reader Survey

Fill it out, mail it in, and Win!

We need to know what you think of the new PC Gamer magazine so we can do more of the stuff you like, less of the stuff you don't, and add whatever you think is missing. Check your answers on the form below, and send it to PC Gamer, 300-A S. Westgate Drive, Greensboro, NC 27407. You'll get a better magazine out of it, and a chance at one of 20 exclusive PC Gamer bowling shirts! If you don't want to cut up your magazine, a photocopy will do fine.

1. How did you get this copy of PC Gamer?

- a) I'm a subscriber
 b) I bought it on the newsstand
 c) A friend gave me his copy

2) What kind of PC do you own? Fill in the processor speed, if you know it.

- a) 286
 b) 386SX _____ MHz
 c) 386DX _____ MHz
 d) 486SX _____ MHz
 e) 486DX(2) _____ MHz
 f) Pentium _____ MHz
How much memory (RAM) do you have? _____ MB RAM

3) When might you upgrade your computer?

- a) Within the next 6 months
 b) Within the next 12 months
 c) I don't plan to upgrade

4) Where did you buy your system?

- a) Mail-order company
 b) Computer specialty store
 c) Department Store
 d) Other

5) What peripherals do you own?

- a) Joystick
 b) Sound card
 c) CD-ROM drive
 d) External speakers
 e) Rudder pedals
 f) Other (please specify)

6) What kinds of peripherals do you plan to buy in the next 6 months?

- a) Joystick
 b) Sound card
 c) CD-ROM drive
 d) External speakers
 e) Rudder pedals
 f) Other (please specify)

7) What's your age?

- a) Under 15
 b) 16-21
 c) 22-26
 d) 27-35
 e) 36-45
 f) 46-55
 g) 56 or older

8) Are you...

- a) Male b) Female

PC GAMER

Reader Survey

9) Do you have children?

- a) Yes — _____ boys, _____ girls
 b) No children

10) My total household income is...

- a) less than \$20,000
 b) \$20,000-\$49,999
 c) \$50,000-\$74,999
 d) \$75,000-\$99,999
 e) \$100,000-\$199,000
 f) over \$200,000

11) How would you rate the PC gaming mags you read (1-10, 10 being the best)?

PC Gamer	/10
_____	/10
_____	/10

12) What are your favorite types of PC entertainment? Pick as many as apply

- a) Arcade
 b) Strategy
 c) Role-playing and Fantasy role-playing
 d) Educational
 e) On-line
 f) Sports
 g) War games
 h) Flight sims
 i) Adult
 j) Other (please specify)

13) How many people read your copy of PC Gamer? (Please specify)

14) Do you want more, or less, of:

	More	Less	Same
a) Scoops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Eyewitness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Features	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Game reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Extended Play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Desktop General	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Alternate Lives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) The Learning Game	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Sim Column	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Tim's Tech Shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Strategy Central	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Contests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15) How many games have you bought in the last six months?

- a) 1-5
 b) 5-10
 c) 10-15
 d) Over 15

16) What new features would you particularly like to see?

Name: _____

Address: _____

LETTERS

why Sierra, say, feels it doesn't need copy protection while LucasArts always uses it is something we've never managed to get a satisfactory answer to, though. Hey, there may be a future investigative feature brewing...

First Impressions

Since space is at a premium and we've been getting so much reaction to the first issue, here are a few highlights from some of the many letters we've received...

...The articles are first rate, the reviews on target, and the layout and information content superb. I was completely thrilled, since the move from the superb PC Entertainment to PC Gamer was greeted with a fair bit of foreboding on my part...

Alan Goodrich,
Apalachin, NY

...I've just started reading your magazine and have decided it's the new #1, above all the other computer gaming magazines I've read before. I decided this because of the way you do your reviews, the way you rate the games and show what their highs and lows are. I just wish there was a magazine like yours earlier!

John Re,
Rising City, Ne

...After reading about and hearing about Theme Park from a few places, I thought the game just wasn't for me. But after receiving your premier issue with the demo disk, I decided to check it out... and I was instantly hooked. I can't stop playing the game because it's so addictive! Thanks to your demo disk, I'm planning to go to the mall soon and pick up the game. I hope other software publishers will see this letter, and consider putting out demo versions of their games too.

Peter Sitko,
Birdsboro, PA

...I'd like to see a "running index" of games, which would include reviews, hints, and other in-depth articles that have appeared in all issues to date. A number of times I found myself digging through my old stacks of PC Entertainment and PC Strategy Guide, looking for hints or reviews of a game that I'd just picked up in the discount bin, often without success. It would have been nice if I could turn to the back of current issue and find articles in some sort of cross-reference.

Jim Morey,
Brandon, FL

We think we might try this out on an annual or six monthly basis, not every issue. If we can con Trent into compiling the thing, that is...

...If I were a lot younger and into "escapist" entertainment I would probably subscribe to PC Gamer, because your depth of editorial on the individual

titles is excellent. However, it was not the major source of information on new military simulation software (my main interest) that I need. When you reach 60, you get to be selective about how you use your remaining time. This new magazine is a quality move on your part. I'm sorry that it's not quite right for me.

Paul A. Rivas,
Delavan, WI

We hope you'll continue to pick up the occasional copy, Paul — we'd hate to think you missed last issue's D-Day Anniversary extravaganza, for instance.

...I would like to say that PC Gamer is the best magazine I've ever read. The price was sorta steep, but when I finished reading it I realized it was worth every penny. I love the Scoops.

Features, Reviews, and Eyewitness articles, and particularly Strategy Central! You review all the hottest games, unlike some other PC game magazines. I know a killer magazine when I read one!

Scott Whisnant,
Lenoir City, TN

...I have just finished reading your premier issue, and believe that you're off to a very good start. Your subtitle (the World's Finest PC Games Magazine) seems a bit presumptuous, though, since you're a brand new magazine, and have yet to prove yourselves.

Drew Poulos,
Scottsdale, AZ

That "mission statement" line underneath the title gives us something to aim for. If we don't try to be the best in the world, what's the point?

...I really enjoyed the premier issue of PC Gamer, and definitely agree with the line "The World's Finest PC Games Magazine." The high-tech look and feel of the magazine nicely complements the subject, and the information provided is top-notch. However, why was the limit of 88% chosen for the Editors' Choice awards? It would seem you'd want to make it 90% or above or even 85% or above, so why 88%? Also, why is the letters page at the end of the magazine? At first I thought there was no letters page, because it's normally one of the first few pages in a magazine.

Josephine Y. Chiu,
Louisville, KY

We didn't go with 85% because we felt that would be too easy for software developers to achieve, and we want the Editor's Choice to be a real achievement. We didn't go with 90% because we wanted excellent specialty titles which, although they might not have the broad-based appeal necessary to break into the 90s, to be eligible for the award. As for the letters, we wanted to get some of our most exciting features, like Scoops and the disk pages, right at the front of the mag, pushing letters further back. Hope you get used to their new location!



**FALCON GOLD:
THE BEST-SELLING
COMBAT FLIGHT
SIMULATIONS
OF ALL TIME NOW
IN ONE HANGAR.**



**The complete collection
of Falcon 3.0 flight
simulations plus
Art of the Kill, the
ultimate dogfighting
trainer, on one CD-ROM!**



Three of the world's deadliest jet aircraft. Over 630,000 square miles of realistic terrain in seven different theaters of war. Solitaire, two-player head-to-head and six-player network play. Only Falcon Gold has so much action.

plus *Art of the Kill*™—a tremendous value!

Never before has such awesome firepower and excitement come together. *Falcon Gold* combines the newest versions of *Falcon*® 3.0, *MiG-29*™, *Hornet*, *Naval Strike Fighter*™, and *Operation: Fighting Tiger*™

Experience nonstop action with updated flight models of *MiG* and *Hornet*. Face real-world tactics as you lead your squadron to victory. Enjoy explosive air combat as you dogfight and bomb your way through seven fully-animated war zones. Your gameplay decides the outcome



Learn the secrets of air-to-air combat from the pros with *Art of the Kill*.



of every battle. *Art of the Kill* is the hottest live-action training ever. Learn from a pro how to maneuver and attack—then fly your own training missions.



Experience deadly air-to-air and air-to-ground combat with fully realistic aircraft.

Nothing gives you thrills this real. Nothing shines like *Falcon Gold*.

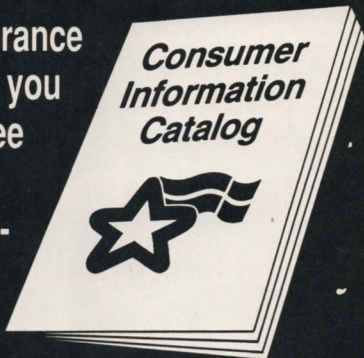


2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501

For Visa/MasterCard orders call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: (800) 695-GAME.

MAY THE SOURCE BE WITH YOU

Don't let the dark forces of ignorance defeat you. Right in this galaxy, you can tap into the source -- the free Consumer Information Catalog. It lists free and low-cost government publications on cosmic topics such as federal benefits, jobs, health, housing, educating your children, cars, and much, much more. So dispel the darkness and send for the source. Write today to Pueblo, Colorado for the free Consumer Information Catalog. Just send your name and address to :



**Consumer Information Center
Department Source
Pueblo, Colorado 81009**

PC GAMER presents...

The LucasArts TIE FIGHTER™ Contest!

The year's most eagerly awaited game is here!

TIE Fighter from LucasArts lets you write a new chapter in the *Star Wars* saga. For the first time, you get to fight the galactic battle of good vs. evil from the perspective of the Empire. As a new pilot in the Imperial Navy, your task is to help restore order to the galaxy by terminating the activities of the insurgent Rebel Alliance — the very Rebels you fought alongside in *X-Wing*!

And to celebrate this hot new release, LucasArts and *PC Gamer* are giving you the chance to WIN some FABULOUS PRIZES!



FIRST PRIZE: The Ultimate *Star Wars*® Experience!

(One winner) Our 1st place winner will receive:

— A Pioneer CLD-D503 CD/LaserDisc Player!

Experience movies with stunning picture quality and incredible digital sound!

— The *Star Wars* Trilogy LaserDisc Set!

Presented in wide-screen, letterbox format, this 3 disc set gives you the complete *Star Wars* trilogy; the feature *From Star Wars to Jedi: The Making of a Saga*; and a condensed version of the new *Star Wars* novel *Creative Impulse*.

"The Emperor will show you the true nature of the Force. He is your master now."

— Darth Vader



SECOND PRIZE:
Darth Vader
Hologram Watches
(Five winners) Keep time with everyone's favorite villain on this 3D, holographic watch.



THIRD PRIZE:
TIE T-Shirts
(20 winners) Haunting images of the Empire decorate this 100% cotton T-Shirt.

All trademarks are acknowledged as the property of their respective owners.

To prove your worth to the Empire (and qualify for our contest), answer the following screening questions posed to all new Imperial Navy recruits. Just circle the correct answers, clip out (or photocopy) the coupon, and send it to:

The PC Gamer TIE Fighter Contest
P.O. Box 29364
Greensboro, NC 27429

All entries must be received by September 1, 1994

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone #: _____

1. What insurgent fighting force is the nemesis of the Empire?
 a) The Light Brigade
 b) The Rebel Alliance
 c) The Navy SEALs

2. The Imperial Navy is part of what entity?
 a) The Empire
 b) The Coalition
 c) The 4th

3. Which of these is a renowned Imperial commander?
 a) Colin Powell
 b) Commander Data
 c) Darth Vader

4. Who turned Anakin Skywalker to the Dark Side?
 a) Emperor Palpatine
 b) Maa Melthame
 c) Jabba the Hutt

5. What's the main fighter of the Imperial Navy?
 a) The TIE Fighter
 b) The Millennium Falcon
 c) The Galaxy 500

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. One entry per person. To enter the contest or for a complete set of rules, use the coupon above or write your name, address, age and telephone number on a "stiff" card and mail to: PC Gamer TIE Fighter Contest, P.O. Box 2084, Greensboro, N.C. 27429. All entries must be received by September 1, 1994. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries. The editor's decision is final.

Next time in PC Gamer...

PC GAMER
August 1994

Issue 4 Goes
On Sale
Aug. 9
Don't Miss It!

We're so happy with this issue, we've decided to do it all again next month! Just wait until you see what we've got lined up for September!

Special Fall Preview!

PC Gamer reports from Summer CES

Just back in time from the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago to file our comprehensive report before the magazine goes to press, the *PC Gamer* editors will be pulling out all the stops to bring you the latest news from the most important gaming event of the year. We'll be running page after page of previews of the most exciting games on display. This is where to turn to find out what you'll be playing this Fall. Don't miss it!



Chicago: The Windy City, City of Big Shoulders, home of everyone's favorite AIs (Bundy and Capone) — and site of the 1994 Summer Consumer Electronics Show!

Dream Machines

Are you ready to move up to a more powerful system, but aren't sure which hardware offers the best performance for your money? Confused by all the new processors, video cards, sound boards, and other peripherals? Then you'll want to check out "Dream Machines," where we show you how to build the best possible PC gaming machine for the very best price. We'll be outlining what features you really need, what you can do without, and what's the smartest, cheapest way to get your hands on the good stuff. Follow our lead, and you'll be able to build yourself the best gaming machine possible — and for the best price, too!

Plus all your regular favorites!

Once again we'll have the best, most comprehensive, and most up-to-date reviews in the business, plus exclusive Scoop! previews of all the hottest new games. And then there's more great strategy, plus Eyewitness, The Desktop General, Extended Play, and all your other favorites. Add to that our always excellent demo disk, and you've got another winner on your hands.



Tie Fighter: We're camping out at LucasArts' doorstep until we get a copy of this game to review.

And we're starting a brand new column

Join Matt Firme for Peripheral Visions, a new addition to our already comprehensive array of regular columns. Matt will be looking at the whole hardware scene, but from the specific viewpoint of the dedicated PC gamer. What sound cards should you be looking at? How should you upgrade to CD-ROM? And what are the real hardware bargains you should be chasing down today? Peripheral Visions will bring you all this and more, every month.

It's all in the
September issue
PC Gamer. Join
us — you'll be
glad you did!

EDITORS: Matthew A. Firme
and Stephen Poole
DEVELOPMENT EDITOR: Matt Bielby
ART DIRECTOR: Edwin C. Malstrom
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR: Scotty Billings
PRODUCTION EDITOR: Shelli Craig
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Trent C. Ward
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Joseph Novicki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Heidi Aycock, Lee Buchanan,
T. Liam McDonald, Gary
Meredith, Neil Randall, William
R. Trotter, Neil West, Scott Wolf

GP PUBLICATIONS, INC.
EDITORIAL, ART, PRODUCTION, MARKETING
300-A S. Westgate Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407
Phone: (910) 852-6711
Fax: (910) 632-1165

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Selby Bateman
SENIOR ART & DESIGN DIRECTOR: Amy L. Pruetzel
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Irma Swain
MARKETING MANAGER: Kathleen Ingram
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: Pamela Lambert
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Judy Earley

**NATIONAL ADVERTISING SALES OFFICE,
SALES AND CIRCULATION MANAGEMENT**
1350 Old Bayshore Highway
Suite 210 Burlington, CA 94010
Phone: 415-525-3888
Fax: 415-525-3876

ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR:
Jonathan Simpson-Bint

ACCOUNT MANAGERS:
Caroline Simpson-Bint
Rick Vandervoorn

DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION: Maryanne Napoli
SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER: Lori Coppin
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Tom Funesti

Please send all advertising
materials to Pamela Lambert,
Production Coordinator, *PC
Gamer*, 300-A South Westgate
Drive, Greensboro, NC 27407.

GP PUBLICATIONS, INC. — CORPORATE

PRESIDENT:
Chris Anderson

VP/FINANCE & CFO:
Tom Valentino

Lance Noonan looked around the ship. To the East was the Italian coast, half hidden in the mist. Somewhere to the West was Malta. And there, off the port bow, were the two E-boats, closing in fast. He'd got them into this way out. Barking orders to the helm, Noonan swung the *Lucky Lady* all the way about. End on, the ship presented its more difficult target to the Germans, though by no means an impossible one. "Maximum speed!" he ordered — though he wondered who he ordered. The most he could hope for was 12 knots, meaning the E-boats would run the town in no time. And they couldn't really fight — *Lucky Lady's* 20mm gun might set off a light sea plane, but little else. "Torpedo in the water!" the first mate was screaming. Noonan watched as the first fish ploughed past the *Lady*, missing by perhaps ten feet. That had been luck — the next shot would strike home for sure. Think, Noonan! he screamed at himself. There had to be a way out — but what? "The light blinded him for a second, and the shock wave sent him skidding across the deck. He could feel the heat on his face as the head E-boat disappeared in a flaming inferno, metal and wood skimming across the water. Someone had saved us — but how?"

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH



THE PLANET'S HOTTEST HARDWARE MEETS THE PLANET'S COOLEST SOFTWARE. INTRODUCING GAME BLASTER CD 16.



Sound
BLASTER
16

All the leaders of the gaming universe have joined forces. And now they're coming to get you. No other game experience can prepare you for what's waiting inside the new Game Blaster CD™ I6 multimedia upgrade kit.* You get a Sound Blaster™ I6-bit sound card and speakers that make all your games sound



terrifyingly real. A double-speed CD-ROM, so all your games run faster. An

FX-2000 joystick, so you can hone your reflexes.

Not to mention the most outrageous games in the cosmos, like Rebel Assault, Sim City 2000, Return to Zork, Iron Helix, F-117A Stealth Fighter, Silent Service II, Civilization, Railroad Tycoon, and The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia. Of course, all your games will sound better because they're made to be played on Sound Blaster. The question is, can you handle it? Want more info or the name of a Creative Labs dealer?

Call 1-800-998-5227.

CREATIVE
CREATIVE LABS, INC.

*Suggested Retail Price \$549.95. © 1994 Creative Technology Ltd. Game Blaster CD, Sound Blaster, and the Sound Blaster and Creative logos are trademarks of Creative Technology Ltd. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. U.S. inquiries: Creative Labs 1-800-998-5227 or 408-428-6600. International inquiries: Creative Technology Ltd, Singapore. TEL 65-773-0233 FAX 65-773-0353.

NO MORE GAMES



TFX

TACTICAL FIGHTER EXPERIMENT

You're finished with training... Had your fun and games. Now it's time to face reality in the most sophisticated aerial combat simulation ever created for your PC—TFX: Tactical Fighter Experiment.

Grab the controls of any of three USAF-spec flight models and spread democracy over five million square miles of topographically accurate landscape.



Equipped with ASRAAMs, Mavericks, M61s, laser-guided GBU...you're fully loaded to tackle more than 200 "real-world" campaigns, based on today's geopolitical realities. And to keep you sweating bullets, from Somalia to Sarajevo, the skies are swarming with AI-programmed bogeys that'll make you pay for your mistakes...with your life.

Log on and engage in TFX. This time, you're not just playing games.

ocean

Ocean of America
1855 O'Toole Avenue, Suite D-102
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 954-0201

TFX © 1993 Ocean of America. All rights reserved.
Ocean is a registered trademark of Ocean Software Limited.

Product Information Number 100

**WIN the TFX
Contest.
See Package
for Details.**